

Theories of human development that enhance our understanding of the college transition process

Douglas Guiffrida

University of Rochester

Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

Abstract

In this paper the author critically reviews theories of identity development, racial identity development, and intrinsic motivation for the purpose of advancing the understanding of how diverse developmental characteristics, stages/tasks, and cultural backgrounds affect the college transition process. Implications of these theories of human development for preparing diverse students for and supporting them during their transitions to college are provided.

Introduction

Prominent educational scholars such as John Dewey (1938), Jean Piaget (1952), Lawrence Kohlberg (1972), and Jerome Bruner (1971) have long argued that effective educational practices and policies must be developed in relationship to the developmental needs of students. These theorists have collectively asserted that theories of human development provide the interpretive foundation from which to base effective educational objectives, interventions, and assessments. In fact, it is in this long-held tradition of education being grounded in developmental theory that led to Bruner's (1960) controversial realization that "the foundation of any subject can be taught to anybody at any age in some form [as long as educators begin] where the student *is*" (p. 12).

While numerous developmental theories have been judiciously woven into K-12 pedagogical practices, evidence suggests that theories of human development have not been used extensively to understand the college transition process or to develop compensatory programs to support students during these transitions. For example, the leading theory used to describe the student departure process, offered by Tinto (1993), describes the importance of student social and academic integration into college, but does not link these integrative processes to the developmental needs of students. Additionally, the United States Department of Education, which funds the largest college preparation program (Upward Bound) and college student support program (Student Support Services) in the United States does not require or even suggest that these programs consider the developmental needs of students when designing their interventions. Moreover, Pattengale (2005) has noted that few college faculty outside of the field

of human development or education are familiar with theories of student development and even fewer design curricula based upon the developmental needs of students.

In *Questions that Matter* (Social Science Research Council, 2006), an interdisciplinary team of scholars reviewed the state of knowledge regarding college transitions and highlighted the need to recognize the developmental needs of students when designing theories to explain the college transition process and interventions to support student transitions to college.

Additionally, the report concluded that theories of identity development, especially identity development that occurs “among different racial/ethnic/gender/income groups and subgroups” (p. 10) appeared especially fertile for understanding the college transition process among diverse students. The purpose of this paper is to identify and critically review salient theories of human development, with a focus on theories of identity development, to provide an understanding of how diverse developmental characteristics, stages/tasks, and cultural backgrounds affect the college transition process. Implications of these theories for preparing diverse students for and supporting them during their transitions to college will also be provided.

I will begin by presenting Erikson’s (1968) Psychosocial Theory of Development as a foundation for understanding the identity formation process in traditional-aged college students and delineate implications of this work for enhancing our understanding of college student transitions. Next, I will review theories of racial identity development (i.e., Chavous et al., 2003; Cross, 1995; Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, in press; Phinney, 1995) and describe the ways in which these theories can expand upon Erikson’s foundational work to be more descriptive of the transitional experiences of diverse students. I will conclude with a review of several theories of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Guiffrida, 2006; Kanungo, 1981) as a means for building upon the motivational perspectives inherent in the identity development literature.

Erikson's (1968) Theory of Identity Development

Erik Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development is widely regarded as one of the most influential theories for understanding the identity development process in adolescents and young adults. Although he held no formal academic degrees, Erikson received extensive training as a psychoanalyst and was influenced heavily by Freudian developmental thinking (Crain, 2000). While recognizing value in Freud's psychosexual stages, Erikson sought to expand Freud's ideas by recognizing how encounters with the social world shape human development.

One foundational premise of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development is based on the epigenetic principle. Borrowed from the field of embryology, the epigenetic principle asserts that all things develop based on an inherent ground plan that arises from within the organism. According to Erikson (1968), each part of a person's psychological development has its own special time for "ascendancy" until all parts have risen to form a whole (p. 92). Inherent in this principle is the idea that development is not only sequential and age-related, but that it is also shaped by interactions with the environment, which Erikson believed could both support and hinder development.

The second foundational premise of Erikson's theory is that individuals must pass through certain stages of development, with each stage marked by a particular developmental conflict or *crisis*. Erikson noted that the term *crisis* did not necessarily equate to psychological emergencies, life-threatening events, or impending catastrophes. Rather, he defined a developmental crisis as "...a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth recovery, and further differentiation" (p. 16). Erikson asserted that for humans to successfully negotiate each developmental stage, it

was necessary to experience both sides of the crisis and then synthesize these experiences in a constructive manner. Successful negotiation of the conflict resulted in the positive (syntonic) quality becoming the more dominant part of the person's ego, which would then serve to assist the person in negotiating later developmental stages. However, failure to resolve the conflict in a satisfactory manner would result in the negative (dystonic) quality becoming the dominant part of ego resulting in unhealthy development, which would not only interfere with later development, but could also result in psychopathology.

Erikson asserted that during adolescence, the dominant developmental task was the development of the identity. Erikson agreed with Freud regarding the tremendous influence of physical changes and the emergence of the libido on adolescent developmental tasks; but he also viewed adolescence as a time of great social conflict that caused young people to reexamine who they are, what they believe in, and their fit in the larger social order. He labeled the developmental crisis at this stage as *identity versus identity (or role) confusion*. Consistent with the epigenetic principle, Erikson believed adolescence is a time when all young people begin to realize that their prior identity has become increasingly inadequate to handle all the new choices and dilemmas they experience as a result of their physical and psychological maturation. This realization causes them to critically reflect upon their roles and interactions in past experiences while also maintaining active engagement with society in an effort to identify new, more adaptive roles and views of one's self, a process he referred to as *psychosocial reciprocity*.

According to Erikson, three key identity issues that adolescents must address and resolve during this period of identity exploration relate to their vocational choices, religious ideologies, and political beliefs. Unlike young children, who tend to hold unrealistic career aspirations (e.g., musician, professional athlete, model, etc.), adolescents begin to pay more serious attention to

finding realistic career possibilities that fit their interests, skills, and abilities. Adolescents may also begin to question long-held religious and political ideologies of their families, neighbors, and friends, which they once uncritically accepted as dogmatic truths.

Erikson recognized that the process of abandoning prior norms and values in search of more fitting ways of being required great effort and was often difficult and frustrating for adolescents, especially when confronting and critically evaluating the norms, values, and ideas of their parents and members of their home communities. This stage is characterized by a temporary sense of confusion and normlessness, which can often cause adolescents to become preoccupied with the ways in which others view them, especially peers, and to show intolerance toward others who do not share their views at the moment. As a result, adolescents often spend great amounts of time interacting with peers in order to receive constant feedback about themselves. This period is also marked by strong identification with in-groups that provide a temporary sense of identity and allow them to try-out new roles that are likely not available to them in relationships at home with parents and siblings. According to Erikson, romantic partners also serve an important role in the identity development process. Unlike Freud, Erikson refused to believe that romantic relationships in adolescence served purely to fulfill biological needs. Rather, he saw these relationships as an important means for testing one's identity through the eyes of their partners and potential partners. This transition period may also be marked by over-identification with idols, such as musicians, actors or actresses, professional athletes, etc, as a means of finding a temporary sense of identity as they struggle to de-identify with their parents and other strong role models from childhood.

While Erikson recognized the need for strong relationships with peers, in-groups, and role models, he also cautioned that over-identification with these groups could hinder identity

development if adolescents uncritically accepted the norms and values of the group or the role model and integrated them as part of the ego without extended testing and critical thought. Eventually, he argued, successful identity formation would involve psychologically freeing themselves from these relationships, just as they did with parents, to continue testing and forming their own identity. To assist in this process, Erikson asserted that adolescents need to enter a psychological moratorium or a time off from real world activities in order to explore and experiment with different identity roles.

Erikson asserted that adolescents who failed to establish a secure identity, because of life circumstances, societal expectations, or because of their own unwillingness to face the psychological unease associated with this transitional period, would become either identity confused (or diffused) or identity foreclosed. *Identity confused* people have an incomplete or disjointed sense of self-characteristics. They tend to avoid anxiety, confrontation, and anything that forces them to struggle with the complexities of life. *Identity foreclosed* people, defined by a premature acceptance of self-characteristics that they often find incompatible later in life, tend to view the world dogmatically and uncritically. They are generally quick to challenge others but are often unable to produce viable alternative because of their limited life experiences and unwillingness to compromise (Muuss, 1996).

One consequence of failing to achieve a secure identity is that these individuals would be unlikely to successfully negotiate the primary task related to the next stage of young adulthood: intimacy versus isolation. *Identity confused* people might be too concerned with others perceptions of them to establish intimate relationships; or, they may take the opposite extreme and have little regard for connections with others. Additionally, their insecure identity might prohibit them from making or keeping commitments to others. *Identity foreclosed* individuals,

having established intimate relationships based on identities they may later find incompatible, would be unlikely to maintain their intimate relationships as their identities change and adapt. In addition to failing to establish intimate relationships, those who fail or avoid the identity development process may seek to distance themselves from the complex work associated with this difficult transition process by taking drugs, consuming alcohol, and even committing suicide.

Erikson's work has been the subject of much research in the past five decades. Much of the research stems from the work of James Marcia who operationalized Erikson's identity statuses. Marcia (1980) was the first to develop a taxonomy of adolescence based on the following four identity statuses outlined by Erikson: (1) *Identity Confused Subjects*- have not thought yet about their identities or experienced a developmental crisis; (2) *Foreclosed Subjects*- have not yet experienced a developmental crisis but have already made commitments to particular elements of identity through identification with parents or other significant others; (3) *Moratorium Subjects*- are actively struggling to define their identities by exploration but have developed only tentative commitments so far (a necessary stage toward identity achievement); and (4) *Identity-Achieved Subjects*- have successfully explored their identity through crises and have well-defined personal identities.

Marcia (1980) also operationalized the various dimensions of identity development, beginning with the three core areas identified by Erikson: vocational choices, religious beliefs, and political philosophy. Marcia also significantly expanded our understanding of the additional, complex dimensions of identity development experienced by adolescents. His work with female subjects led him to recognize areas such as family and career conflict, beliefs about sexual expression, and gender role attitudes as salient to the identity development process. In later work,

he also recognized avocational interests, relationships with friends and dates, role of spouse, role of parent, and priorities assigned to work and career goals as additional elements of the identity formation process during adolescence.

In addition to operationalizing Erikson's developmental task and stages, Marcia's work also enhanced Erikson's theory in ways that allowed for a more complex understanding of identity development. For example, Marcia (1980) argued that the term "versus" should be replaced with the term "and", which actually fits closer with the complimentary status of these dichotomies that Erikson intended (e.g., identity *and* identity confusion). Marcia also introduced the term *status regression* as a way of recognizing the possibility that people could regress to earlier stages of development, a phenomenon that has been supported by subsequent research (Steinberg, 2002). Finally, Marcia's work was critical in realizing the importance of the college experience to the identity formation process. Marcia (1980) found that identity development takes place largely among adolescents ages 18-21, rather than in younger years as previously thought, a conclusion that has been supported in more recent research (Waterman, 1999a, 1999b).

Implications of Erikson's (1968) Theory

Erikson's psychosocial theory of development has had a lasting impact in the field of human development and ranks among the most tested and validated theories in the field (see Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, Vollebergh, 1999). Research indicates that people who achieve secure identities are more likely to establish healthy relationships later in life, have higher self-esteem, high levels of moral reasoning, and more developed cognitive reasoning skills (Adams, 1992; Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Meeus, Iedema, & Vollebergh, 1999; van Hoof, 1999; Waterman, 1999a, 1999b). Additionally, research indicates that college attendance can enhance the identity

development process (Constantinople, 1969) by actually prolonging the moratorium stage (Montemayor, Brown, & Adams, 1985).

This line of work suggests that Erikson's work is central in understanding the college transition process. Consistent with the seminal theory of college student persistence offered by Tinto (1993), Erikson believed that college provided an opportunity for students to *break away* from prior norms and values. However, Erikson, unlike Tinto, did not believe that students should seek to quickly adopt new norms and values associated with culture of the institution in order to become socially and academically integrated. In fact, Erikson cautioned that students who too quickly adopt the values and culture associated with the college environment might be at risk for identity foreclosure. Rather, Erikson believed that students should use the academic and social opportunities provided to them by the college to critically evaluate their old identities while testing new ways of being.

To encourage the *moratorium* that Erikson believed was necessary for establishing secure identities, colleges need to provide academic curricula that allow and encourage students to think deeply about the issues most important to their identity development, which can include in-depth study of diverse religious beliefs, political ideologies, career opportunities, and gender role attitudes. Equally important is that college student affairs personnel provide social opportunities that encourage students to connect with a diverse range of peers and activities, which will allow them to test and challenge both new and old ways of thinking about themselves and their place in the world.

Limitations of Erikson's (1968) Theory

Despite the strong empirical support for the theory, there are several noteworthy limitations and necessary updates to this work that have implications for understanding the

college transition process. Arnett (2000) argued that sweeping societal changes in industrialized nations have delayed the onset of adulthood. Unlike what Erikson noted in the early part of the 20th century, Arnett argued that adolescence no longer provides the transition to adulthood and the settling in to adult roles, such as marriage, parenthood, and professional careers. Instead, Arnett identified a new period, which he labeled “emerging adulthood”, as providing the necessary transition to adulthood in industrialized nations.

Arnett (2000) argued that unlike adolescents, young adults tend not to live with parents, experience extreme physical changes of puberty, attend secondary school, or be a part of a school-based culture. Young adults are, however, legal to vote and sign legal documents, which further distinguishes them from adolescents. Likewise, Arnett argued that young adults differ from adults because the majority do not consider themselves adults (Arnett, 2001); do not have full-time, stable careers; are unmarried, and childless. While Arnett’s thesis is less appropriate for conceptualizing the experiences of immigrants or children of immigrants, many of whom are likely to be required to serve in more adult roles than their White, Western peers (Mollenkopf et al., in press), Arnett’s research does have implications for conceptualizing the college experiences of students from mainstream, Western households. This research suggests that while colleges undoubtedly need to provide opportunities for identity formation, it should not be expected that students fully form their identities before graduation. Rather, Arnett’s research helps us understand that in contemporary industrialized nations such as the United States, college may provide a starting point for identity exploration that continues well into students late twenties and early thirties.

Critics have also contended that the Erikson’s (1968) theory fails to recognize the identity development of minority adolescents. Erikson recognized that identity development was not just

an individual process, but also resulted from the collective identity assigned to a person's class, nationality, and culture. Erikson also noted the potential for minorities to develop negative self-identities if they internalized negative images of their ethnic racial group. However, as Phinney and Alipuria (1990) have pointed out, early research on identity development largely ignored ethnic/racial development and the role of the collective identity in the ethnic identity formation process. Fortunately, there has been much research in the years since Erikson first articulated this theory regarding the ways in which both Minority and White adolescents develop a sense of ethnic identity. This line of research provides an additional perspective regarding how theories of human development can be used to enhance our understanding of the college transition process.

Ethnic/Racial Identity Theories

Growing ethnic/racial diversity across U.S. college campuses has led to an increased interest in understanding the developmental and psychological impact of cross-cultural interactions. While early research examining the effects of these cross-cultural interactions focused on understanding the attitudes of members of the majority culture toward members of minority groups, more recent research has shifted toward understanding the attitudes that members of minority groups have about their own group. The construct of ethnic identity, which recognizes multiple dimensions of student ethnicity, ethnic awareness, and cultural in-group versus out-group preferences, provides one important means for recognizing how students' perceptions about their own ethnic group can affect their college experiences. In this section, I will describe two seminal theories of ethnic identity development along with research that illustrates how the construct of ethnic identity can assist in better understanding Minority college students' transitions to college.

Cross's (1971, 1991) Theory of Nigrescence

One of the first theories attempting to map out stages of racial identity development was Cross's (1971) Theory of Nigrescence. Cross (1995) originally developed this theory to describe the process of "self-hating to self-healing" that he noticed among young Black men associated with the Black power movement of the early 1970s (p.96). The theory, however, has been extended beyond explaining the identity development of socially active Black men and research now suggests utility of the model in describing the racial identity development of all Blacks (Cross, 2001).

The first stage in Cross's model, labeled the *pre-encounter* stage, is characterized by the conscious or unconscious devaluing of Blackness along with an over-identification with mainstream, White values. Cross's original (1971) description of the pre-encounter stage indicated that poor self-esteem and even self-hatred were associated with this first stage of racial identity development. In a revised version of the model, however, Cross (1991) recognized that not all Blacks in the pre-encounter stage manifested self-hatred and poor self-esteem. In fact, research conducted since the first version of Cross's model indicated that it was possible for Blacks in the pre-encounter stage to have healthy views of themselves and high self-esteem (Cross, 2001).

To explain this contradictory research, Cross (2001) theorized that self-hatred and poor self-esteem among Blacks in the pre-encounter stage was determined by the degree to which race was salient to the individual. Cross asserted that Blacks in the pre-encounter stage with high race saliency were most likely to experience self-hatred, poor self-esteem, and poor mental health; however, he also noted that pre-encounter individuals with low race saliency, which he

labeled *pre-encounter assimilation*, may never experience these negative psychological states because they pay little attention to race or racial stereotypes.

The next stage in Cross's model is the *encounter stage*, which begins when individuals experience an event or *crisis* that challenges their prior ways of thinking about race and their own racial identity. This crisis normally involves an experience or series of experiences in which the individual becomes the victim of some form of discrimination or racism. Cross points out, however, that the crisis could also involve learning about powerful cultural-historical information regarding the Black experience that challenges earlier, Eurocentric historical accounts they have previously been taught.

Similar to Erikson's (1968) Theory of Identity Development, Cross recognized that people often initially react to crises that challenge prior identities with confusion, denial, and even sadness and depression; however, Cross noted that for most Blacks, their emotions quickly develop into anger for being misled about the history of their race and the prevalence of racism in today's society. These emotions can be intensified when individuals reflect upon instances in which they may have unwittingly contributed to the exploitation and degradation of Blacks or to the perpetuation of negative Black stereotypes. These emotions, Cross (1995) argued, serve as the "fuel" necessary to power the person into the next stage of Black identity development (p. 106).

The third stage in Cross's model is the *immersion-emersion stage*, which represents the most externally noticeable shifts in identity. This stage is characterized by a dichotomized view of the world in which things associated with White culture become devalued, even inferior or evil, and things associated with Black culture are viewed as superior. People in the immersion-emersion stage begin with a drastic withdrawal from the dominant culture and become more

immersed in African American culture. Because immersion-emersion individuals are largely unfamiliar with the Black identity they aspire to attain, they begin by adhering to rather simplistic or glorified images of what they believe Blackness to be, which are often manifested in dramatic changes in their dress, language, hairstyles, music, etc. Cross (1995) noted that the paradox of this stage is that “the most dramatic displays of the new Black image are often exhibited by those who are the least at ease with the new identity” (p.106). While the stage is characterized by extreme Black pride, the actual internalization of a Black identity does not occur until the next stage.

The fourth and final stage is called *internalization*. In this stage, conflicts between the old and new identities become resolved and feelings of “anti-White” and “anti-Black” begin to subside. People who reach this stage have confidence in their own Blackness and are no longer concerned with being “Black enough” in the eyes of others (Cross, 1995, p. 113). They often maintain active engagement in social justice issues but move from a more aggressive and somewhat irrational stance against White oppression to one that is more thoughtful and measured. People in this stage internalize a new identity that gives high salience to Blackness while also allowing them to focus on other areas of identity development, including religion, gender roles, career development, and political issues. People in the internalization stage are typically the most psychologically healthy Blacks, as characterized by greater feelings of security, pride, flexibility, and racial tolerance (Cross, 2001).

Cross’s theory has been the subject of a great deal of research and is widely regarded as one of the most influential theories of ethnic identity (Cross, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2002). Research on the original (1971) model has generally supported the propositions of the model (Helms, 1990; Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993) with the exception of the “self-hatred” aspect of the pre-

encounter stage, which Cross (1995) addressed in an updated version of the theory. Cross's theory has been particularly well received by psychotherapists who use the theory extensively to illustrate the needs of culturally diverse clients and therapists (Sue & Sue, 2002). Additionally, the model has served as the foundation to numerous race-specific theories of identity development, including Asian American identity development (Kim, 1981; Sue & Sue, 2002), Latino/Hispanic identity development (Atkinson, 1983; Ruiz, 1990), and White identity development (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1990). Despite the widespread appeal of the theory, Tanaka (2002), in his critical review of higher education student developmental theories, argued that Cross's model remains underappreciated by higher education scholars. Tanaka concluded that Cross's work, which aggressively challenged Eurocentric biases about the identity formation process, should be "a major part of any new theoretical construct that attempts to locate student development in particular historical and diasporic contexts" (p. 281).

One limitation of applying Cross's theory to describe the development of traditional-aged college students is that the theory was intended to describe adult identity development rather than the identity development processes of adolescents and young adults. Additionally, Cross did not assert any links between his theory of nigrescence and academic achievement or student views about schooling. However, additional ethnic identity research conducted by Phinney and her colleagues has been instrumental in building upon Cross's work in ways that allow ethnic identity development theory to be applied to college-aged students and for connections to emerge between ethnic identity development and the college transition process.

Phinney's (1989) Theory of Ethnic Identity Development

Like other racial identity theorists, Phinney recognized the centrality of racial identity to understanding the psychological functioning of Minorities. However, unlike prior racial identity

theorists like Cross, Phinney believed that racial identity development was not just a developmental task reserved for adulthood. In fact, Phinney asserted that increasing cognitive abilities, additional interactions outside their home environments, and growing attention to their social lives and their own appearances make the process of racial identity development especially important to understanding the identity development of Minority adolescents and young adults. Additionally, unlike prior racial identity theorists who examined racial identity developmental processes in one minority group, Phinney sought to create a model that could be applied across different ethnic/racial groups.

Phinney (1989) identified three common stages that existed among the race-specific identity development models that have been offered by theorists such as Cross (1971), Kim (1981), and Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1983). The first commonality was that these models all began with a stage describing some form of *unexamined ethnic identity*. This unexamined stage is characterized by one of the following stances regarding race: (1) a preference for the dominant culture, (2) a lack of interest in ethnicity as a defining characteristic of identity, or (3) a pro-ethnicity identity that was passed on to them by parents, peers, etc., although the person has given little thought to exploring identity issues themselves.

The second common stage that Phinney (1989) identified among the race-specific identity theories related to the task of identity *exploration*. Similar to Erikson's (1968) moratorium stage, people in the exploration stage experience a crisis event that forces them to rethink their prior ethnic identity and to begin an intense process of self-discovery about their own culture, which can simultaneously involve devaluing or rejecting mainstream values. The third and final stage Phinney identified from the various ethnic/racial identity theories was the

achieved ethnic identity stage, which is when people reach a point of acceptance regarding their racial identity and the cultural differences between their own group and the majority.

Phinney conducted several studies to test the propositions of her model with adolescents and young adults. In the first study, Phinney (1989) tested the model using mixed methods with diverse population of 91 adolescents (10th graders ages 15-17), which included White Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The results supported the existence of the three stages of ethnic identity development across this diverse population of adolescents. In particular, Phinney found that nearly half of the Minority youth in the study from all three Minority groups demonstrated some level of racial identity development. Contrarily, most White students in the study did not show evidence of any ethnic identity development, even those who were in the minority in their school environments, beyond seeing themselves as “American.”

The results of this study support the importance of ethnic identity development to Minority adolescent identity development. Approximately one-fifth of the adolescent participants displayed characteristics consistent with identity-achieved states and another one-fifth were found to be in the moratorium stage. Phinney noted that this result was much higher than the percentage of identity-achieved students in an earlier study she conducted with eighth graders (Phinney & Tarver, 1988), which suggests the possibility of increases in ethnic identity development as individuals progress through adolescence. The results of this study also suggest potential implications for understanding relationships between ethnic identity development and academic achievement. Phinney found that students who achieved higher ethnic identity development stages also scored higher on several factors related to academic success, including self-evaluation, sense of mastery, social and peer interactions, and family relations.

In a second study, Phinney & Alipuria (1990) tested the ethnic identity model with a diverse group of college students. The researchers examined the relative importance of ethnic identity development in college students when compared with other identity domains identified by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980), which included occupations, politics, religion, and sex roles. Phinney and Alipuria also examined relationships between ethnic identity and self-esteem. Consistent with the results of her prior study with high school students, the results indicated that ethnic identity development was an important component of identity development in college students, but that it was especially important for Minority students. The researchers found that similar to White students in the study, occupational and sex-role identity were the primary identity concerns for Minority students; however, ethnic identity ranked as the third most important element of the identity search process for Minority students (above politics and religion). Additionally, the results demonstrated strong relationships between self-esteem and ethnic identity variables for minority group members, especially African American and Latino students. The researchers concluded that ethnic identity was an important element of minority college student identity development and that significant positive correlations existed between ethnic identity development and self-esteem.

In a third study, Roberts, Phinney, Massey, Chen, Roberts, and Romero (1999) tested Phinney's ethnic identity model with a large (n=5423), diverse group of young adolescents (ages 12-14) to explore whether ethnic identity development begins during early adolescence. The study was also intended to clarify the construct of ethnic identity by examining the structure and validity of the Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) and to test for correlations between ethnic identity and psychological wellness. The results of the factor analysis supported both the measure and the construct of ethnic identity with young adolescents

across diverse ethnic groups. Although mean ethnic identity scores were lower for these young adolescents than they were for the high school and college students in the prior two studies, the results indicated that the process of ethnic identity development begins for many Minority students during early adolescence. Consistent with the prior two studies, White students scored significantly lower on ethnic identity scores than Minority students, even the White students who were minorities in their schools. This result supports earlier studies indicating that race saliency, or the importance a person attributes to his/her race, is much higher for Minority youth than White youth. Additionally, the researchers again found positive correlations between ethnic identity and measures of psychological well-being, which in this study included measures of coping, mastery, self-esteem, optimism, and happiness; and negative correlations with loneliness and depression.

This line of research conducted by Phinney and her associates was crucial in identifying the importance of ethnic identity to underrepresented Minority adolescents and young adults. Additionally, Phinney's research highlighted the common processes of ethnic identity development that are shared among members of different underrepresented groups. Phinney's work also established links between ethnic identity development and psychological well-being in Minority youth. Although Phinney's work did not directly measure links between ethnic identity development and academic achievement and persistence, additional studies have explored this complex relationship. This line of research provides potential for an improved understanding of how theories of human development can be used to advance our understanding of the college transition process.

Ethnic Identity and Academic Achievement

A review of ethnic identity research revealed two recent studies in which relationships between stages of ethnic identity development and college student academic achievement were explored. In the first study, Parker and Flowers (2003) surveyed 118 African American college students attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) to explore correlations between racial identity and GPA. Racial identity was measured using the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RAIS; Parham & Helms, 1981), which is based largely on Cross's theory of ethnic identity development. The results indicated that academic achievement was not related to any of the ethnic identity stages identified by Cross. The researchers did find, however, that students with higher levels of internalization (the final stage of ethnic identity) also demonstrated higher levels of campus connectedness. This finding supports research from Taylor & Howard-Hamilton (1995) and Mitchell and Dell (1992) who found that as African American students progress to higher levels of racial identity, they become more involved in campus life. Therefore, while this study failed to find correlations between ethnic identity development and academic achievement, the results highlight the importance of racial identity to the process of social integration at PWIs.

The second recent study exploring links between racial identity and academic achievement was conducted by Locket and Harrell (2003) who surveyed 128 African American students attending a Historically Black College & University (HBCU). Like Parker and Flowers (2003), the researchers used the RAIS (Parham & Helms, 1981) to measure ethnic identity stage. Consistent with the prior study, Locket and Harrell found only a minimal relationship between racial identity stage and level of academic achievement. The results of their hierarchical linear regression indicated that self-esteem was actually a much better predictor of grade point average than ethnic identity stage.

While the findings from Parker and Flowers suggest the importance of ethnic identity development to Minority students' social integration at PWIs, these results, combined with the results from Lockett and Harrell at an HBCU, suggest only minimal relationships between stages of ethnic identity (as conceptualized by Cross and Phinney) and academic achievement. There are, however, two recent studies that have investigated relationships between ethnic identity and Minority student academic achievement using more complex and nuanced definitions of racial identity development that have found strong links between these two variables.

In the first study, Oyserman et al. (in press) argued that to understand links between racial identity and academic achievement, researchers must understand how student motivation for attending and succeeding in school is impacted by their views of their in-group and their needs to overcome obstacles and prejudice in the larger society. The researchers hypothesized that the educational success in Minority students was linked to the extent to which students (1) were connected with their in-group, (2) were aware of racism, and (3) believed that their in-group valued academic achievement.

Oyserman et al. (in press) tested this hypothesis in a study with 348 Minority high school students (8th-12th grade). The results indicated that minority students who scored high in all three of subcomponents of racial ethnic identity were more likely to do better in school than students who scored lower in these areas. Further, the authors found that Minority youth who viewed their in-group as connected with the larger society tended to be more psychologically healthy. These results suggest, therefore, that in order to succeed in school, Minority students must not only be connected to their in-group, but they must believe that the in-group values education and academic achievement. While the study was conducted only with high school

students, the authors suggested the results could also be applied to higher education and career success.

Similarly, Chavous et al. (2003) also realized that prior research attempting to examine relationships between ethnic identity and academic achievement had failed to distinguish the extent to which minority students identified with their group or their definitions of self with regard to their group. Chavous et al., proposed that various subcomponents of racial identity, which included the importance of race to the individual's identity (race centrality), the extent to which individuals feel good about their minority group, and their perceptions regarding larger societal beliefs about their minority group (public regard) were associated with academic beliefs, high school performance, and later academic attainment.

To test their hypothesis, Chavous et al. (2003) conducted longitudinal study with 606, 17-year-old African American high school students. The results supported the hypothesis that African American students' beliefs about race related to their educational beliefs and educational outcomes (high school completion and college attendance). African American high-school students in this study that scored high on race centrality, private regard, and public regard, demonstrated more positive academic beliefs than students that scored lower in those areas. The results also demonstrated that students who perceived positive societal views of African Americans showed stronger attachments to schooling. With regard to later academic attainment (high school completion and college attendance), only race centrality and private regard were positively related. The researchers hypothesized that as African American students get older, their attitudes about themselves and their own group seem to outweigh their perceived prejudices.

Chavous et al. (2003) also created cluster profiles to understand how racial identity variables worked together to influence academic attitudes and outcomes. The cluster analysis revealed that African American youth with lower group affiliation, less positive group affect and more negative societal views (which they labeled the “alienated group”) had the highest drop out rates and lowest college attendance. A second cluster of students that emerged from the analysis demonstrated stronger group centrality, positive group affect, and negative perceptions of societal views of Blacks (which they labeled the “buffering/defensive group”) had the lowest high school drop-out rate and the highest college attendance rate.

Based on these findings, Chavous et al. (2003) speculated that complex relationships existed between minority students’ ethnic identity, motivational orientation, and academic achievement. The fact that African American youth in this study with positive group beliefs but who felt societal prejudices against their group showed the highest scores on measures of academic beliefs and achievement, suggests that these youth use their negative societal perceptions of African Americans as motivation to attend and do well in school in order to increase their own social position and the status of all African Americans. The authors also hypothesized that students in the more idealized group, that is, those who also had positive views of African Americans but who do not perceive prejudice against their group, probably are motivated to do well in school based on their own intrinsic interests rather than to break down societal stereotypes. The authors concluded that models of academic achievement and motivation could benefit from including factors that recognize “how youth place themselves in relation to their group as well as how they incorporate these social and structural factors into their belief systems” (p. 1088).

Implications of Ethnic Identity Theory and Research

The research provided by Phinney and her associates is useful for enhancing our understanding of the Minority college student transition process. This line of research established that ethnic identity development is salient not only to the identity development of adults, but to young adults and adolescents as well, especially to Minorities for whom race is salient. Phinney's work allows us to understand that most underrepresented Minorities undergo similar processes in their racial identity development and that these processes can begin in early adolescence and continue with increasing importance as they approach adulthood. Phinney's research also established positive correlations between ethnic identity development and measures of psychological wellness, many of which can facilitate academic self-efficacy.

Minority students in the *pre-encounter stage*, or what Phinney referred to as the *unexamined ethnic identity stage*, are likely to begin college by attempting to *integrate* into the mainstream academic and social realms of the college. While the success of these students' initial transitions to college may hinge upon their abilities to successfully integrate into these realms of university life, ethnic identity theory allows us to recognize that many of these students are likely to encounter a host of experiences at college that challenge their prior thinking about race. Examples of these potential *crises* include learning in courses about historically oppressive or racist societal and institutional practices (Cross, 1995), experiencing covert racism from White faculty, staff, or peers (Guiffrida, 2005), and even conflicts with same-race peers who question their adherence to White values and their seemingly aloof or naïve stances toward oppressive practices (Guiffrida, 2003).

Ethnic identity development research suggests that Minority students who transition to the *immersion-emersion* stage of ethnic identity development as a result of their college

experiences are likely to experience anger, depression, and self-doubt. These students are not likely be supported or retained by college faculty and support staff who attempt to *integrate* them into mainstream college life during this volatile time, as some theories of persistence such as Tinto's (1993) suggest. Rather, students in this stage of ethnic identity development need outlets available to them on campus in the surrounding community that allow them to test their new anti-white or pro-ethnic identities in safe, developmentally appropriate ways.

Similarly, students who progress through the *immersion-emersion stage* and begin to reach the *internalization* stage while at college are also unlikely to benefit from attempts to *integrate* them into the academic and social climates of the institution. These students need opportunities to maintain active engagement in social justice issues related to their ethnic/racial group, while at the same time, establish connections with (rather than integrate into) academic and social outlets that provide opportunities to explore other identity issues, such as religion, gender roles, or career expectations.

Additionally, research by Oyserman et al. (in press) and Chavous et al. (2003) suggests that Minority students' views about their own ethnic groups, the extent to which they feel connected to their ethnic-group, and their perceptions of societal views about their ethnic group greatly impact motivation to succeed in school. Results of these two studies indicate that students who view their ethnic groups positively, are well-connected with members of their ethnic group, and who perceive societal views of their group as favorable are likely to succeed in college when they are motivated by their own intrinsic interests. These students, similar to many White students, will benefit from discovering their academic interests early on and connecting with faculty who can facilitate and support these intrinsic interests. However, Minority students with similarly positive views of their ethnic groups and solid connections within their ethnic

groups who perceive societal views of their group as negative are likely to be motivated to attend college not to fulfill their intrinsic interests, but by the opportunity their academic achievement has to increase the status of their race in society. The academic and social connections these students strive to make at college, therefore, will likely be geared more towards fostering their desires for social justice than to fulfill intrinsic learning interests. While the ethnic identity research reviewed in this paper highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation to the college transition process, there is extensive research and theory from the field of psychology that provides a more dynamic understanding of the relationships between intrinsic motivation and the college transition process.

Theories of Intrinsic Motivation

For centuries, philosophers and psychologists have attempted to understand why people become motivated to learn (Weiner, 1992). For much of the 20th century, it was believed that motivation was driven by innate biological forces such as hunger, thirst, and sex (Freud, 1936); or extrinsic rewards and punishments (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996; Mawhinney, 1979; Watson, 1913). Neither of these views, however, explained motivation in the absence of biological or behavioral rewards. To explain this, researchers theorized that motivation could also be derived purely from satisfaction inherent in the activity itself, which psychologists have labeled *intrinsic motivation* (White, 1959; Woodworth, 1921). Since the 1970's, the influence of intrinsic motivation on learning has been well supported in the literature (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). In this section, I will briefly present three theories of intrinsic motivation that are useful in building upon the motivational perspectives that arise from ethnic identity research and theory.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

One of the most validated theories for understanding motivation in education is Deci and Ryan's (1991) Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). SDT is based on the premise that intrinsic motivation, or motivation derived purely from the satisfaction inherent in the activity itself, is more conducive to learning than extrinsic motivation, or motivation that is derived to achieve an external reward or to avoid a punishment. SDT posits three primary components to intrinsic motivation: (1) autonomy, which occurs when students choose to become engaged in learning because the subject and activities are closely aligned to their interests and values; (2) competence, which is the need to test and challenge one's abilities; and (3) relatedness, which is the need to establish close, secure relationships with others. SDT also recognizes three forms of extrinsic motivation that are much less effective in facilitating student learning: (1) *external regulation*, the least effective form, occurs when students are motivated purely by rewards and punishments; (2) *introjected regulation*, which occurs when students who are motivated by rewards and punishments begin to partially internalize this external pressure to learn; and (3) *identified regulation*, which occurs when the externalized pressure to learn becomes internalized by the student. While research has indicated that both *external* and *introjected regulation* often negatively impact learning, *identified regulation* can have a positive impact on learning when the material is considered important but uninteresting to the learner (Reeve et al., 2004). The absence of either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation results in what Deci and Ryan refer to as *amotivation*, which is when students go through the motions of learning but fail to actually learn the material.

SDT asserts that successful college students are likely to have motivational orientations that are intrinsic, meaning these students are autonomous learners who seek knowledge for its

own sake, have demonstrated competence and seek to challenge themselves in order to grow, and view learning as a means for establishing or securing relationships with others. Similarly, college students at risk for attrition or low academic achievement have either amotivational orientations towards learning or non-self-determined forms of extrinsic motivation.

In addition to recognizing the importance of intrinsic motivation to learning outcomes, SDT also recognizes how external events can support or hinder intrinsic motivation. Reeve et al. (2004) cited extensive research concluding that controlling behaviors on the part of teachers or parents, such as surveillance, threats of punishment, imposed goals, competition, and evaluation, all serve to undermine student intrinsic motivation toward learning. This line of research has also found that parents and teachers who provide students with choices, opportunities for self-direction, rationales, acknowledgement of feelings, and positive feedback increase students' intrinsic motivation towards learning.

While SDT has been widely researched and validated in a number of educational settings (Reeve et al., 2004), there are cross-cultural concerns regarding SDT's notion of *autonomy* that may prevent this theory from being fully descriptive of all college students. SDT asserts that the basic psychological conditions (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) are inherent needs in all humans, irrespective of cultural backgrounds. However, cross-cultural studies have led some researchers to question whether autonomy is a necessary requisite to well-being in collectivist societies (Bond, 1988; Carver & Scheier, 2000; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Miller, 1997; Oishi, 2000). With this cross-cultural consideration in mind, I (Guiffrida, 2006) reviewed a number of studies that examined the constructs of individualism and collectivism, including research by Triandis (1989, 1990, 1999), Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier (2002), and Phinney (1996). This research suggested the need to consider individualist and collectivist cultural norms when

assessing motivational orientation. While SDT provides an important foundation for recognizing the role of intrinsic motivation in the college transition process, it is also useful to consider a second theory of intrinsic motivation that recognizes the impact of varying cultural norms on motivational orientation.

Job Involvement Theory (JIT)

Like SDT, Job Involvement Theory (JIT; Kanungo, 1982) recognizes that intrinsic and extrinsic forces motivate human behavior; however, Kanungo's theory challenged the assumption that intrinsic rewards are always preferable for facilitating motivation. Rather, Kanungo proposed that motivation depended upon the ability of the task to fulfill a person's most salient need, which could be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Kanungo, whose model was designed to describe motivation in the workforce, argued that workers' salient needs were shaped by past socialization experiences, including the degree to which workers internalized their societal/cultural norms, and that these needs were continually modified by present conditions. The result was that different workers, depending upon how they were socialized, developed different need-saliency patterns. For example, Kanungo pointed out that workers who value Western individualist norms often believe that work is central to satisfying salient intrinsic needs for autonomy and competence and salient extrinsic needs for pay, promotion, and personal recognition. Employees socialized in collectivist cultures are more likely to view work as a means for satisfying salient intrinsic needs for relatedness, societal improvement, equity, and harmony, even at the expense of other intrinsic needs such as autonomy or extrinsic rewards such as personal recognition or financial gains.

Kanungo (1981) conducted a study of business managers that illustrated the significance of recognizing workers' salient needs. Contrary to the dominant view of motivation at the time,

he found that managers motivated by extrinsic needs, such as pay and promotion, tended to be more involved with their jobs. Employees whose salient needs were intrinsic, were less involved in their jobs. He attributed this to the rewards' structure inherent in much of the corporate world, which is based on satisfaction of extrinsic needs through pay, prestige, and promotion. Although JIT (Kanungo, 1982) has yet to be applied directly to learning or educational persistence, Kanungo has suggested that the model could be used to understand involvement in systems outside the work environment, including involvement patterns within families and communities. Therefore, JIT is useful in understanding how relationships between motivational orientation and cultural orientation affect the college transition process.

Cultural-Motivational Theory (CMT)

In an effort to be more descriptive of the experiences of students from collectivist cultural orientations, I (Guiffrida, 2006) integrated salient aspects of JIT (Kanungo, 1982) into SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1991) to begin the process of forming a new theory for understanding how motivation can impact college student success, which I referred to as the Cultural-Motivational Theory of college student academic achievement and persistence (CMT). CMT suggests that successful college students who have internalized individualist cultural norms are likely to succeed if the college environment provides opportunities for them to satisfy their intrinsic needs for autonomy and competence. However, the theory also indicates that successful individualist-oriented students may also be motivated by extrinsic needs for high GPAs in order to obtain successful, well-paying, prestigious jobs upon graduation. This aspect of the theory suggests that collectivist-oriented students may be at risk for academic under-achievement and attrition if they seek to fulfill salient intrinsic needs for relatedness at the expense of their less salient needs for autonomy, competence, and extrinsic rewards (i.e., GPA, recognition, etc.). CMT, therefore,

recognizes not only student motivational orientation, but also the potential for individualist and collectivist cultural norms to influence motivational orientation.

Combining salient elements of SDT and JIT also provides an understanding of the ways in which students' social systems, both past and present, influence motivation and college commitment. Based on the principles of SDT, CMT asserts that successful college students are likely to have interacted with teachers and parents who provided autonomous support to students rather than controlling their academic behaviors. CMT also suggests that continued relationships with social systems that provide autonomy-supportive relationships at college, such as peers, faculty, and family members, are necessary to support student intrinsic motivation while at college. CMT, however, also recognizes how ingrained cultural norms affect student needs saliency patterns, which, in turn, affect the social systems that students seek to support them at college. For example, a student socialized in an individualist culture may seek to join social systems that fulfill salient intrinsic needs for autonomy and competence and salient extrinsic needs for high GPA and personal recognition. A student socialized in a more collectivist culture might focus on establishing relationships within social systems that fulfill salient intrinsic needs for relatedness and societal harmony instead of systems that support academic achievement.

In summary, the central tenets of CMT related to human motivation are as follows: (1) student motivational orientation impacts college and pre-college commitment towards academic success and persistence; (2) student motivational orientation is impacted by collectivist or individualist cultural norms; and (3) both home social systems (i.e., teachers, parents, friends, etc.) and college social systems (i.e., peers, faculty, staff) shape and fulfill students' salient needs. The theory, therefore, recognizes the impact of motivational orientation on academic goal commitment while also acknowledging that cultural norms and home and university social

systems (past and present) can have significant effects upon student motivation and subsequent academic commitment, performance, and persistence decisions.

Research on Theories of Intrinsic Motivation and College Students

Although there has not been a great deal of research that has investigated relationships between motivational orientation and academic achievement and persistence in college, the limited amount of research in this area largely supports these theories of intrinsic motivation. For example, studies by Stage (1989) and Cote & Levine (1997) found motivational orientations in college students that were similar to the orientations delineated in SDT. Similarly, Vallerand and Bissonnette (1992), in one of the only studies that specifically tested SDT in relationship to college student academic achievement and persistence, found that the most successful students were intrinsically motivated. Additionally, studies have investigated how differences in collectivism and individualism impact Minority students' experiences at college. Thompson and Fretz (1991) found that collectivist-oriented African American students had more difficulty becoming integrated into the more competitive academic and social cultures of a predominantly white college. Similarly, Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) found that the more individualist Minority students tended to have better adjustment and more commitment to college than those with collective orientations. These studies support the existence of the motivational orientations in college students described in CMT and indicate relationships between motivational orientation and academic achievement and persistence. Additionally, this line of research highlights the importance of considering individualist/collectivist cultural norms when assessing the impact of motivational orientation to college student academic achievement and persistence.

Implications of Theories of Intrinsic Motivation

The theories of intrinsic motivation reviewed in this paper provide implications for understanding the college transition process and supporting students during these transitions. According to the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), successful students are motivated to attend college to fulfill their own intrinsic interests in learning and obtaining a college degree. These students not only understand the value of their college education, but also are interested in learning because the material they have chosen to study is interesting to them, allows them to test and challenge themselves in new ways, and provides opportunities to connect with others. As a result, these intrinsically motivated students are much more likely to seek out and engage in activities, programs, and services that enhance their abilities to succeed in the academic and social systems at college than students who are extrinsically motivated or amotivated.

Furthermore, SDT recognizes that student support structures, including parents and high school and college faculty and staff, can significantly shape student motivational orientation by engaging with students in autonomy-supportive ways. For example, high school counselors and college academic advisors can foster intrinsic motivation among their students by providing comprehensive career counseling that allows students to identify the academic courses and college majors that seem appealing to them early in their college careers. Counseling and advising services can also include helping students select the service activities and other extra-curricular programs that appeal to their intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Moreover, SDT research also suggests that faculty who implement constructivist pedagogical practices that allow for student exploration and self-direction can increase intrinsic motivation for learning, thus facilitating successful transitions to college.

Additionally, both Job-Involvement Theory and the Cultural-Motivational Theory suggest the importance of identifying and understanding students' salient motivational orientations to facilitate college transitions. College faculty and staff who are aware of students' salient motivational orientations will be better able to connect students to university social systems that fulfill these salient needs. For example, students who maintain collectivist societal values may benefit from being connected early on to organizations that emphasize fulfillment of collectivist needs for relatedness and social change. At the same time, faculty and staff members can caution collectivist-oriented students regarding the potential for involvement with collectivist-focused social systems to interfere with their academics. Theories of intrinsic motivation also emphasize the need for college administrators, faculty, and staff to recognize collectivist-oriented initiatives, including activities focusing on social change and relatedness on campus and in society, when assessing academic success.

Summary and Conclusions

The theories of human development reviewed in this paper suggest there is much more to supporting college transitions than providing students with adequate academic preparation, funding, and information about the college transition process. These theories point to the need to also understand and support student identity development and intrinsic motivation. Erikson's (1968) work not only highlights the centrality of identity development to traditional-aged college students, but also provides implications regarding the ways that college faculty and staff can facilitate the identity development process by providing and encouraging students to participate in a wide range of courses and extracurricular activities that challenge their prior identities and expose them to new ways of thinking about vocational and avocational interests, religious

beliefs, political philosophies, family and gender roles, sexual expression and parental roles to name a few.

Furthermore, while research indicates that the elements of identity formation described above are important for all traditional-aged college students to explore, research with Minority students suggests the need to also consider the ethnic identity development process when attempting to understand and support Minority student college transitions. Theories of ethnic identity development suggest that college faculty and staff who are mindful of the ethnic identity process can provide healthy outlets that allow Minority students to challenge their prior ethnic identities and to test new identities in a safe and supportive environment that is not only tolerant of differences, but that embraces cultural differences as a core value and mission of the institution. Ethnic identity theory and research also suggest that Minority students' views about their ethnic groups, the extent to which they feel connected to their ethnic groups, and their perceptions of societal views about their ethnic group can not only impact their ethnic identity development, but can also impact their motivation for succeeding in college.

Finally, theories of intrinsic motivation suggest the need to recognize the importance of attending college to fulfill intrinsic interests in learning rather than attending to fulfill the expectations of others. This line of research, which is grounded in decades of SDT research (Deci & Ryan, 1991), also highlights the importance of students establishing relationships (before and during college) with autonomy-supportive family members, friends, and teachers. Theories on intrinsic motivation also assist in understanding differences in the needs of students from individualist and collectivist societies and how these differences may impact that ways in which students may seek to engage with university and home social systems to fulfill their

salient needs for autonomy, relatedness, competence, and extrinsic rewards during their college transitions.

The theories reviewed in this paper focus largely on expanding our understanding of the transitions of underrepresented Minority students and, as a result, fail to address a number of other important variables related to the transition process, including differences experienced between men and women. I also failed to review research and theory targeted toward understanding the experiences of immigrants or the children of immigrants, which is a steadily increasing segment of the population that is likely to experience their college transitions quite differently than White students or Underrepresented Minority students. Including the perspectives from other sections in this volume that specifically address research and theory related to gender and the issues of immigrants will greatly enhance our understanding of the college transition process for a more diverse group of students. While the theories of human development reviewed in this paper fail to address all the developmental variables relative to the college student transitions, they provide an opening for conceptualizing the student transition process in a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive manner.

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