Comparing Spiritual Development and Cognitive Development

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Three spiritual development theories and theorists (i.e., Parks, Fowler, and Helminiak) were compared with traditional cognitive development theory and theorists. The analysis reveals both commonalities between the two sets of theories and unique contributions to an understanding of student development on the part of spiritual development theory. Practical and research implications are described.

Theories of spiritual development have existed at the margins of student development theory for about 20 years and have not been given serious consideration as to what they contribute to our understanding of the experiences of college students. Given the expanding interest in spirituality and the increased focus on developmental theory related to spirituality (Love & Talbot, 1999), it makes sense to consider where theories of spiritual development fit into the constellation of student development theories and what, if anything, spiritual development theories uniquely contribute to the discourse of student development. A major focus in this article is to describe the theories of spiritual development and compare them to cognitive development theories. The specific theories of spiritual development used for this analysis are those of Sharon Daloz Parks (1986, 2000), James Fowler (1981, 1996), and Daniel Helminiak (1987, 1996). Given obvious space limitations, the cognitive development theories used in this comparison (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970) are described in less depth due to their status in the "canon" of student affairs literature. Prior to comparing spiritual development and cognitive development it is first necessary to differentiate religion from spirituality, discuss the relationship between faith development and spiritual development, and provide brief descriptions of the spiritual development theories used in this comparison.

Differentiating Religion and Spirituality

Differentiating the notion of religion from issues of spirituality and faith is important, both because of spirituality's long history as an aspect of theology, and because the terms (i.e., *religion*, *spirituality*, *faith*) are often used interchangeably (e.g., "What faith are you?" "I am a Catholic."). According to Rev. David Palmer, Ph.D. (personal communication, June 16, 2001) all religions include three basic elements. First, at the core of religions is the experience of or quest for the "ultimate." A prime biblical example would be the encounter of Moses with the burning bush. This core religious experience is then expressed and communicated to others by means of story (e.g., the Bible, the Koran) and symbol (e.g., music, dance, images). Story and symbol are key aspects of Sunday school and the worship experience in Christian churches. Finally, reflection on religious experiences is articulated in philosophical terms in the form of doctrine and dogma.

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Parks (2000), like Fowler (1981) before her, spoke of faith development as opposed to spiritual development, though throughout this article the terms are treated synonymously. At its core, faith is a process of meaning-making, which is the process of making sense out of the activities of life, seeking patterns, order, coherence, and relation between and among the disparate elements of human living. It is the process of discovering and creating connections among experiences and events. Faith is differentiated from traditional cognitive development theories because it is the activity of seeking and composing meaning involving the most comprehensive dimensions of the human experience. That is, faith is trying to make sense of the "big picture," trying to find an overall sense of meaning and purpose in one's life.

Parks (2000) described spirituality to be a personal search for meaning, transcendence, wholeness, purpose, and "apprehension of spirit (or Spirit) as the animating essence at the core of life" (p. 16). Therefore from this perspective, spirituality is at the core of religion. However, it is important to differentiate these two terms because some religious people may be tied so closely to dogma and doctrine as to be disconnected from issues of the spirit, and those who fail to distinguish story (e.g., the Bible) from dogma and doctrine. Other people disavow any notion of or connection with religion, yet are deeply involved in a search for meaning, wholeness, and purpose.

Faith Development and Spiritual Development

Parks described faith as both transcendent and immanent. That is, in the experience and activity of faith, it both lies beyond the range of ordinary perception and experience (i.e.,

transcendent) and, thus, is ultimately unknowable, and it remains within the individual and the particulars of individual experience (i.e., immanent). Parks also differentiated the notion of faith from belief. Although faith development is a dynamic and active process of meaning-making and faith "undergoes transformation across the whole life span," (p. 16) a belief is more static than faith and something accepted as true resulting in a condition where the holder is free from doubt. Faith is also a social phenomenon, dealing with our understanding of our relationships with others, and with the common contexts in which those relationships are embedded (Bee, 1987). Bee pointed out that implicit in this definition of faith is a distinction between the form and structure of one's faith and the specific content. That means that any given level of spiritual development may be expressed in a wide variety of belief systems or religions, which is captured in the framework of religion described above. Parks (2000) indicated that a person of faith may well deny the existence of a supernatural being called God, but that individual would at least be living with confidence in some center of value and with loyalty to some cause. As Helminiak (1996, p. 5) pointed out, "Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and much of Western humanism have obvious spiritual intent without any reference to God."

Helminiak (1987) added several defining factors to spiritual development. As indicated above, he argued that authentic self-transcendence is a prime criterion of spiritual development and it is also the central principle needed to explain spiritual development in a nontheological context. Authentic self-transcendence is a conscious and self-aware process. By "authentic," Helminiak (1987) meant that the individual is motivated

by an ongoing personal commitment to openness, questioning, honesty, and goodwill. Helminiak (1987) also argued that spiritual development, because it is rooted in authentic self-transcendence, only begins when an individual reaches a reflectively, critically, and analytically self-aware stage of development, typically in or near adulthood. He differed from both Parks and Fowler on this point, though he recognized the cognitive developmental changes that occur prior to this stage.

Another factor that Helminiak (1987) added is the individual's openness to the spiritual and to developing spiritually. To develop spiritually, one must desire wholeness, authenticity, and genuineness. All spiritual development theorists recognize that at some point in the developmental scheme, further development is not guaranteed. Finally, Helminiak (1987) was specific in arguing that spiritual development involves the whole person; it entails personal integrity and wholeness, meaning an integration of multiple developmental domains, including emotional, social, and cognitive.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT THEORISTS AND THEORIES
Sharon Daloz Parks

Sharon Daloz Parks is a theologian who has worked as a teacher, counselor, and minister in a collegiate environment. Her work provided the framework for this theoretical comparison. Parks grounded her work in both the psychosocial and cognitive-structural traditions of student development theory. Her theory grew from her dissertation research on the meaning-making of college students. She foregrounded and emphasized the interrelatedness of cognitive development; affective states; and interpersonal, social, and

cultural influences. Parks's first major work in the area of spirituality—faith development—was her book, *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment,* published in 1986, before the current surge of interest in spirituality. Consequently, it generally was ignored in student affairs. In fact, the book went out of print. In the mid-1980s, spirituality-related issues such as faith development were still strongly taboo on many college campuses, in academe in general, and in student affairs in particular. Since the mid-1990s, however, there has been a surge in the quest for meaning, or for spiritual or religious fulfillment both within society and among traditional-aged college students. Given this growing focus on issues of the spirit, Parks (2000) revisited her earlier work on faith development, further elaborated her theory, and published a new book on the topic: *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith.*

Parks's work was used as the foundation of this synthesis for three reasons. First, her original work built on Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development. In fact, she extended Fowler's work by proposing another stage of faith development between Adolescent and Adult, which she called "Young Adult," thereby more clearly focusing on traditional-aged college students. Second, she used and compared her work to the theories and research of Jean Piaget, William Perry, Robert Kegan, Erik Erikson, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Carol Gilligan. The origins of virtually all theories of student cognitive development can be traced to Piaget's work. All the others in this list are considered student development theorists, so her work was actually grounded in traditional student development theory. Third, her work is the

most recent and, therefore, incorporated the most current research conducted in cognitive and psychosocial theory.

Because her work formed the foundation of this comparison, my description of it in this section is brief. Parks asserted that most stage-related developmental theories jump directly from adolescent to adult and attribute any "noise" or anomalies between those two stages to the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Parks argued instead that there is actually another stage of development between adolescence and adulthood that she labeled young adult. She also differentiated in adulthood between tested adults and mature adults. This results in a four-stage model of development: Adolescent/Conventional, Young Adult, Tested Adult, and Mature Adult. Each stage is comprised of three components (See Table 1 for the model and comparison to other theories): forms of knowing (a cognitive aspect of faith development), forms of dependence (an affective and social aspect of faith development), and forms of community (a social aspect of faith development). Forms of knowing refers to the relationships of self to authority (including self-authority) and self to knowledge. This cognitive component of spiritual development was built on the work of William Perry (1970) and James Fowler (1981), and the forms of knowing and their development correspond quite closely with the structures that Perry, Fowler, and other cognitive-structural theorists have posited.

Parks described forms of dependence as affective aspects of faith development; they are focused on how people feel. However, in her description of the various stages of dependence she also described interpersonal interactions, which are social aspects of development, and the view of oneself as an authority figure, which is an aspect of cognitive development. She described the dependence part of her model as focusing on the relationships through which we discover and change our views of knowledge and faith. More than the other two elements of her model, the forms of dependence demonstrate the interactive and holistic nature of her model.

Forms of community address a "neglect" (Kegan, 1982) in many cognitive development theories or in the synopses of cognitive development theories, namely, the failure to give adequate recognition to the influence of interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts on one's development. Piaget (1969) was clear about the influence that interaction with the environment had on cognitive development, but it was a fact often overlooked by theorists who followed him or who sought to extend his theory (Parks, 2000). Parks's model was focused particularly on community to more clearly identify the tension between the desire for agency and autonomy and the desire for belonging, connection, and intimacy. Taken together, Parks's interacting components of faith development bring together the cognitive, affective, and interpersonal elements of human existence. The addition of the dependence and community components draws somewhat on the work of Erik Erikson (1968) and especially on the work of Robert Kegan (1994), the only other major student development theorist who proposed a theory integrating the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of development (Love & Guthrie, 1999).

James Fowler

James Fowler focused on the intersection of theology, human development, and psychology. He was among the first to extend human development theory (especially Piaget and Erikson) to the understanding of spiritual

development. Fowler conducted research on the stages of faith development in Boston in the 1970s, and although he first articulated his theory in *Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith* (1978), it was in *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (1981) that he presented the first comprehensive description of the theory and the research upon which it is based.

Fowler's theory includes seven stages of faith development that cover the life span (actually six stages plus a prestage describing infants). Table 1 shows the three stages most likely to be experienced by college students: Mythic-Literal, Synthetic-Conventional, and Individuative-Reflective, plus his two additional advanced stages—Conjunctive and Universalizing. Briefly, Fowler (1996) compared the Mythic-Literal stage to Piaget's Concrete Operational stage of cognitive development in that the ability to adopt a perspective emerges, as does rational, linear, and logical thinking. The name of the stage comes from the fact that the narrative, stories, symbols, and concepts of the particular religious or spiritual context are seen as literally true by someone at this stage. Fowler indicated that this stage usually emerges in middle childhood, but like all subsequent stages can persist far into the life span. The Synthetic-Conventional stage usually does not appear before adolescence. In this stage, "capable of using and appreciating abstract concepts, young persons begin to think about their thinking, to reflect upon their stories, and to name and synthesize their meanings" (Fowler, 1996, p. 61). He also wrote:

> During this stage youths develop attachments to beliefs, values, and elements of personal style that link them in conforming relations with the most significant others among their peers, family, and

other adults. Identity, beliefs, and values are strongly felt, even when they contain contradictory elements. However, they tend to be espoused in tacit rather than explicit formulations. At this stage, one's ideology or worldview is lived and asserted; it is not yet a matter of critical and reflective articulation. (1996, p. 61)

The centerpiece of the Individuative-Reflective stage is the taking on of authority by individuals for defining values, goals, and meanings that they had previously abdicated to other individuals and groups. The individual is able to reflect on one's own existence and process of development and begins to self-define and to self-construct roles and relationships. It is in Conjunctive Faith where limits and contradictions within one's experience become evident. Truths, beliefs, and faith are recognized to contain paradoxes, contradictions, and multiple perspectives. Finally, Universalizing Faith represents the normative endpoint of spiritual development (Fowler, 1981). Simply, it is the lived perfection of Conjunctive Faith attained by relatively few. Fowler identified Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Theresa as exemplars of this stage. Although the last two stages would be rare even in college staff, no less college students, they do establish the trajectory of spiritual development as conceptualized by Fowler.

Daniel Helminiak

With a background in psychology and theology, Daniel Helminiak has focused of much of his work on understanding the relationships among the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of human development. Helminiak (1987) proposed a five-stage model of spiritual development; however, in his own description only the last three stages represent spiritual development,

which he described as strictly an adult phenomena. This model was based on analysis and integration of both human development theory and theology, and not on empirical research. The first two stages he borrowed from Loevinger's (1977) theory of ego development. They are Conformist and the transitional stage labeled Conscientious/ Conformist. These two stages represent the experience of adolescents who are moving from the stage of seeking approval and being directed externally in their meaning making to self-awareness and self-determination. According to Helminiak (1987) the Conscientious stage is the first stage of spiritual development:

> It is characterized by the achievement of significantly structuring one's life according to one's own understanding of things, by optimism over one's newly accepted sense of responsibility for oneself and one's world, and by a rather unbending commitment to one's principles. (p. 85)

In the Compassionate stage one learns to surrender some of the world one has constructed for oneself. "One's commitments are no less intense, but they are more realistic, more nuanced, and more supported by deeply felt and complex emotion. One becomes more gentle with oneself and with others" (p. 85). Finally, the Cosmic stage is related to Maslow's self-actualization:

> [An] on-going actualization of potentials, capacities, talents, as fulfillment of a mission (or call, fate, destiny, vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an increasing trend toward unity, integration, or synergy within the person. (Helminiak, 1987, p. 86)

THEORETICAL COMPARISONS

The theoretical comparisons are conducted through Parks's four stages of spiritual development and the components of forms of knowing, dependence, and community.

Adolescent/Conventional

Before students embark on the developmental journey to adulthood, Parks (2000) saw their faith—the meaning they make of the world—existing first in a form that is based in and dependent on authority in the context of a monolithic community that defines "us" (in the community) and "them" (those outside the community). During this stage of development, the absolute form of knowing breaks down and other perspectives are heard and recognized, the individual grows in self-awareness, authorities may be resisted, and the definition and experience of the community becomes more diffuse. This is a time of great ambiguity and uncertainty for individuals in their journey of spiritual development.

Forms of knowing. Faith development is the process of making meaning and the changes in that process over time. Cognitive development theorists described the process of change in the cognitive structures that students use to make meaning of their world by focusing on how meaning is structured, not on what is known or believed. The forms of knowing in Parks's (2000) model basically reflect the cognitive developmental aspect of spiritual development.

The forms of knowing that Parks (2000) identified in the Adolescent/Conventional stage of faith development are the authority-bound and dualistic form of knowing and the unqualified relativism form of knowing. Authority-bound and dualistic knowing is grounded in some form of authority that exists outside of oneself. It can be easily recognizable as an element within one's life (e.g., one's religion, the Bible, the Constitution) or a person or group (e.g., parents,

teachers, clergy). It can also be more socially pervasive and subtle, such as the unquestioned authority of media, culturally affirmed roles and personalities (e.g., experts, artists, entertainers), and customs (e.g., conventions of thought, feeling, and behavior) (Parks, 2000). This is similar in focus to Fowler's (1981) stage of Mythic-Literal faith, which is based on a linear, orderly, and predictable universe, governed by a predictable God. In this stage, faith is composed of the stories, rules, and implicit values of the community in which one exists. Parks pointed out that when an authority-bound form of knowing "prevails, people cannot stand outside of their own perspective, or reflect upon their own thought" (p. 55). As individuals experience the breakdown in the absolute nature of authorities in their life, they shift to the form of knowing that Parks labeled unqualified relativism. The unqualified relativism form of knowing is the recognition on the part of the knower that "all knowledge is shaped by, and thus relative to, the context and relationships within which it is composed . . . and every opinion and judgment may be as worthy as any other" (p. 57).

Like Parks, Perry (1970) labeled the first position in his scheme of intellectual development Dualism. However, from her description of the Unqualified Relativism form of knowing, Parks (2000) appears to have collapsed the distinctions between Perry's positions of Multiplicity and his position of Relativism. Where Perry described three positions (i.e., Early Multiplicity, Late Multiplicity, and Relativism), Parks (2000) described only one. In fact, Perry also differentiated between two forms of Late Multiplicity (i.e., Multiplicity Correlate and Relativism Subordinate). This lack of differentiation in Parks's theory becomes

evident because her next form of knowing (Probing Commitment) is more closely related to Perry's position of Initial Commitment in Relativism. The point of this comparison is that Parks appears to have downplayed a significant transition that occurs in students' forms of sense-making at this stage of development. Perry, on the other hand, differentiated Multiplicity and Relativism due to their distinctively different sets of underlying assumptions. While recognizing the existence of ambiguity and uncertainty, Perry described Multiplicity as still being grounded in the basic assumptions of Dualism—that ultimately there is one truth, one right answer to all questions, and the hope that the world would be ultimately knowable. Relativism, on the other hand, is grounded in different assumptions (i.e., the acceptance that the world is inherently ambiguous, complex, and unknowable). This lack of clarity in Parks's form of knowing makes comparisons to other theories more difficult, because all other theories follow Perry's distinction in forms of knowing based on these two radically different sets of assumptions. The gap between Unqualified Relativism and Probing Commitment is represented by a cell with a question mark in Table 1.

Additionally, other cognitive development theorists perceived greater gradations in the form and structure of knowing within this particular period of development than did Parks (2000). For example, Baxter Magolda (1992) identified Absolute Knowing (akin to Authority-Bound/Dualistic knowing), Transitional and Independent knowing (two aspects of the multiplistic aspect of Unqualified Relativism), and Contextual knowing (similar to aspects of Perry's position of Relativism). Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) identified Received knowing (also

akin to Authority-Bound/Dualistic knowing), Subjective knowing (an aspect of Unqualified Relativism), Procedural knowing (not evident in Parks's scheme), and Constructed knowing (like Baxter Magolda's Contextual knowing, it is similar to aspects of Perry's [1970] position of Relativism). King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model (1994) has seven stages, the first five of which relate to Parks's forms of dualism and unqualified relativism. King and Kitchener also describe three basic positions in their model, the first two of which (Pre-reflective and Quasi-reflective) relate (though not precisely) to Parks's first two forms of knowing. Love and Guthrie (1999) in a synthesis of major cognitive development theories (i.e., Baxter Magolda; Belenky et al.; Kegan, 1994; King & Kitchener; Perry) also identified two basic forms of knowing that correspond somewhat with Parks's first two forms. They labeled their forms of knowing Unequivocal knowing and Radical Subjectivism. Radical Subjectivism differs from Unqualified Relativism in that it is grounded in the same assumptions as Perry's position of Multiplicity and does not correspond to Relativism.

Forms of dependence. The adolescent/conventional forms of dependence are Dependent and Counterdependent. According to Parks (2000), *dependence* means "a person's sense of self and truth depends upon his or her immediate relational and affectional ties in a primary way" (p. 74). One's form of knowing during this time is especially dependent on whatever and whoever the authority is in one's life. Other cognitive development theorists (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky et al., 1986; and King & Kitchener, 1994), either directly or indirectly described the dependence of authority-bound knowers. In addition to the dependence exhibited by women in the received knowing

position, Belenky et al. described a particularly pernicious form of dependence in their Silence status, where women had no voice and any sense of self was absolutely dependent upon the domineering authorities in their lives, such as authoritarian parents, or abusive spouses or partners. Highlighting Parks's assertion relating dependence to affective aspects of faith development, Belenky et al.'s silenced women lived in fear and without hope, very negative emotions that make the process of spiritual development practically impossible.

Counterdependence is movement in opposition to Authority. Parks (2000) indicated that this is an aspect of the adolescent stage, without indicating that it follows directly from dependence or necessarily has to occur at all. In a manner of speaking, Counterdependence is also a form of dependence in that the individual pushes away from the pattern of meaning-making that is familiar and dominant in her or his life. The individual is moving away from or against the authority she or he knows, rather than actively moving toward a new authority or new truth. They are still dependent on the former truth because, absent a new truth, what they know to be true is that it is *not* what they formerly held to be true: "I don't know what I want (or believe), but I know it isn't this." Perry (1970) identified a pattern similar to Parks's notions of Dependence and Counterdependence. Perry's "adherents" tended to identify and agree with authorities through a dualistic structure of the world. Those identified as being in "opposition" set themselves apart from authorities.

Forms of community. Parks (2000) identified two forms of community that take place during a person's journey through the adolescent stage of faith development. The first form of community is Conventional and

the second is Diffuse. A conventional community is one in which conformity by members to cultural norms, interests, and assumptions is expected and enforced. It is homogenous in that the core expectation is that the community is made up of people who are "like us," however "like us" is defined.

Just as absolute authority and dependence on a single authority eventually breaks down, the monolithic nature of the community breaks down as well, or at least a person's willingness to define themselves solely as a member of one particular community declines. Just as in Multiplicity (Perry, 1970) each opinion or truth claim is granted equivalent status, so are relationships as one enters the Diffuse stage of development. One becomes more open to expanding the notion of community, but one's commitment to any particular community weakens.

Summary of adolescent/conventional. How one makes sense of the world, and how one answers the ultimate questions we face as sentient beings (e.g., Why am I here?) during adolescence usually begins with simple answers representing a simple view of a straightforward and knowable world. These questions have answers that can be found in the authorities in individuals' lives and the answers are shared among those in their community. Along the way this innocent view of the world comes under stress. Authorities are found to be in error, undependable, or in conflict. Communities other than those that support a conventional view are experienced and discovered to have some validity or worth. These experiences can result in a loss of faith, though it is a loss of a naive faith, and a loss that actually signals a developmental movement forward. Parks (2000) described the experiences that alter our view of the world in some dramatic way, and especially in this stage of development,

as "shipwrecks." The world (or our view of it) is found to be untrustworthy. We struggle to make sense of competing authorities, of our own growing sense of self-awareness and self-authority, and of the multiple communities we experience. We embark upon the most significant transition of spiritual development—that stage that Parks has labeled Young Adult.

Young Adult

Parks (2000) pointed out that as the expected life span of humans increased, as our society became more complex, and as preparation for adulthood grew longer (e.g., the addition of college and, more recently, graduate school as a requirement for many occupations), the developmental phases from childhood to adulthood lengthened and differentiated. In fact, the phase of development labeled adolescence is a product of the 20th century. Parks suggested that there is another distinguishable phase between adolescence and full adulthood, which she has labeled young adult. Parks (2000) indicated that most developmental psychologists do not recognize such a stage, and instead, refer to it as the process of transition between adolescence and full adulthood. Helminiak (1987), however, does appear to recognize such a stage in his understanding of spiritual development. He sees Loevinger's (1977) Self-Aware level of ego development, as the appropriate transition stage between Fowler's Synthetic-Conventional and Individuative-Reflective stages. In their synthesis of cognitive development theories focused on college students, Love and Guthrie (1999), identified what they labeled "The Great Accommodation." They argued that among the variety of accommodations a person's cognitive structures make during development, this is the most radical. It is the accommodation of

cognitive structures where a person transitions from seeing the world as ultimately knowable and certain to seeing the world as complex, ambiguous, and not completely knowable. This notion of The Great Accommodation applied to spiritual development appears to correspond closely to the theological concept of metanoia, which is a conversion that involves a radical reorientation of one's whole being.

As described by cognitive development theorists, this transition is the time when the individual's own role as knower and authority emerges (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Love and Guthrie (1999) located this great transitional phase at about the place where Parks has added the Young Adult stage. Parks added a dimension to this great accommodation or stage. She emphasized that the most important element of this stage is the emergence of a critical self-awareness—a self-conscious and self-aware self. During adolescence the individual comes to realize the existence of the self as a self and can then hold both one's own perceptions and those of another at the same time. However, in young adulthood one takes ownership, authority, and responsibility for shaping one's own ongoing development. There are actually two elements at play in Parks's theory. The first is the critical self-awareness and the second is the willingness and motivation to respond to the self-awareness by shaping one's own ongoing development. Helminiak (1987) pointed out that many people never completely transcend this stage—they are self-aware, aware of their development, yet actively or passively choose to not continue to develop spiritually or cognitively. As he says, "spiritual growth has been stifled and one may well have settled for a lifetime of spiritual mediocrity" (p. 84).

Forms of knowing. Parks (2000) labeled the form of knowing in the Young Adult stage

Probing Commitment. One who is at the Young Adult stage recognizes that in the complex and contextual nature of the world one must take action, choose a path, shape one's own future—one constructs a faith, one constructs meaning. She adds Probing Commitment between Fowler's (1981) third stage (Synthetic-Conventional) and his fourth stage (Individuative-Reflective) of faith development, which is why a gap has been placed in Table 1 between Fowler's third and fourth stages. In the Synthetic-Conventional stage, an individual is developing an integrated identity; however, that identity is based on tacit elements of the culture in which the individual is embedded. The transition to the Individuative-Reflective stage requires a leap to where one becomes able to critically choose one's beliefs, values, and commitments. Parks argued the existence of a stage in between where an individual makes and learns from tentative commitments. This stage corresponds quite closely to Perry's (1970) position of Initial Commitment in Relativism.

The cognitive development theorists who followed Perry's lead explored other aspects of advanced cognitive development. King and Kitchener (1994) elaborated structural and epistemological aspects of development beyond relativism, focusing on the use of critical inquiry and probabilistic justification to guide knowledge construction. Belenky et al. (1986) described an integration of subjective and objective strategies for knowing. Baxter Magolda (1992) focused on the merging of the gender-related patterns evidenced in her earlier ways of knowing to produce a knower capable of constructing an individual perspective by judging evidence in context. Parks, Perry, and the rest of the theorists recognized the fact that the knower comes into a sense of agency in the knowing

process. Students recognize their active role in considering context, in comparing and evaluating viewpoints to assess relative merit, and in constructing an individual perspective on issues.

Forms of dependence. Parks (2000) described the form of dependence at the young adult stage as fragile inner-dependence. By "fragile" she did not mean weak, feeble, or puny. Instead, she used the term in the way someone would describe a tree sapling—vulnerable, but healthy, vital, and full of promise. Parks compared this emerging sense of self-authority to the notion of subjective knowing where a trust in one's own knowledge and experience is recognized (Belenky et al., 1986). In complex modern society, emerging adults experience a slow and sporadic transition from full dependence upon parents or authorities to independence and autonomy. One can recognize one's ability to shape one's future and make decisions, while recognizing, for example, the financial resources received from parents that allows one to continue in school. In the multiple contexts through which young adults must navigate, they will at times feel like, and be treated like, children (i.e., dependent, without responsibility) and other times and circumstances, they will be treated as adults (i.e., independent, responsible).

Forms of community. Parks (2000) labeled the form of community needed by a young adult to help with the development of a complex adult faith as a mentoring community. She argued that a critical, cognitive self-aware perspective of one's familiar value orientation alone is not enough to precipitate a transformation in faith. She also believed that critical self-awareness combined with a single mentoring figure may still be insufficient to reorder faith itself. The growth that comes with critical self-awareness must be

grounded in the experience of a compatible social group, what she termed a mentoring community.

> [A mentoring community] offers a network of belonging in which young adults feel recognized as who they really are, and as who they are becoming. It offers both challenge and support and thus offers good company for both the emerging strength and the distinctive vulnerability of the young adult. (Parks, 2000, p. 95)

As adolescents and young adults struggle to emerge from the ambiguity of Unqualified Relativism, a mentoring community gives them the hope and expectation that a new robust faith will emerge from the process. Although Parks cited residence halls as potential mentoring communities, her description of this type of community more readily brings to mind learning communities and living-learning centers that are proliferating on campuses. It also appears that the culture, the underlying values, beliefs, norms, and expectations, that form potential mentoring communities need to be considered. The stronger the culture, the less one is able to deviate from the norms, the less one is able to tentatively probe a commitment, instead commitment may be demanded. One need only think of some of the unhealthy aspects of the pledging experiences of fraternities and sororities, organizations with very powerful cultures, to realize the damaging potential of strong cultures that demand commitment while inhibiting critical self-awareness.

This notion of a mentoring community exhibits the element of personal choice in the developmental process. Although the activities in which we choose to partake and the groups we choose to join throughout our life span (including as children) shape the developmental process, it is the self-aware

selection of groups and activities and the awareness of the possible influence on our development that distinguishes these choices from previous choices.

Summary of young adult. Young Adult is the stage at which most traditional age college students find themselves. In the process of spiritual development, students new to college may experience "functional regression," (Love & Guthrie, 1999) where students who undertake new learning in a new environment appropriately regress to previous, more comfortable, stages until they feel comfortable in the new environment. Upon entering college, students may regress to authority-bound truth as provided by professors or administrators, return to a greater dependence on others in authority, and experience college as a diffuse and confusing set of communities or latch on to a single authoritarian community—cults being a most extreme example. College will also be a time where initial probing commitments are made and remade, where one's emerging sense of inner-dependence is tested, and where one may have the opportunity to experience one or more mentoring communities.

Tested Adult and Mature Adult

Parks (2000) described the development that occurs beyond the Young Adult stage. Those individuals who reach the Tested Adult stage may very well be undergraduates, but they are more likely to be postgraduates, graduate students, or beyond. Parks argued that a Mature Adult faith rarely is in evidence before midlife.

Forms of knowing. Parks (2000) did not describe the stages of Tested Commitment and Convictional Commitment in much depth. As she indicated with Tested Commitment, "one's form of knowing and being takes on a tested quality, a sense of fittingness, a

recognition that one is willing to make one's peace and to affirm one's place in the scheme of things" (p. 69). There is a reduction in the ambiguity and dividedness that marked the early period of Probing Commitment. Perry's Commitment in Relativism (Positions 6 through 9 of his scheme) was the least developed aspect of his theory (Love & Guthrie, 1999). In a way, Parks (2000) suffered the same drawback in her model (though it must be stated that the focus of her work was on young adults).

Building on the work of Jane Loevinger (1977) and Fowler, Helminiak (1987) provided more detail about what he perceived to be the postconventional forms of knowing in spiritual development. As indicated above, his first stage of spiritual development is labeled the Conscientious stage. This is followed by the Compassionate stage. He indicated that it is aligned, though imperfectly, with Fowler's Conjunctive stage.

> [In the Compassionate stage] one learns to surrender some of the world one has so painstakingly constructed for oneself. One's commitments are no less intense, but they are more realistic, more nuanced, and more supported by deeply felt and complex emotion. One becomes more gentle with oneself and with others. (Helminiak, p. 85)

In the more advanced stages of spiritual development untangling the influence of cognition, affect, and interpersonal relationships becomes much more difficult.

Forms of dependence. In the last two stages of Parks's (2000) model, the individual moves from a fragile inner-dependence to a confident inner-dependence to interdependence. The movement in faith development she described is from an external focus (dependence on an external authority) to an internal focus (inner-dependence) to an

interaction and healthy integration of the two and to a recognition that throughout one's life there has existed interdependence. Parks pointed out that "what is new, however, is one's awareness of the depth and pervasiveness of the interrelatedness of all of life and the important yet limited strength of one's own perceptions" (pp. 86-87). The movement described above is reminiscent of Chickering's (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) vector of moving through autonomy toward interdependence. He also described an external to internal to integration movement.

Forms of community. Finally, there are the forms of community in which the individual developing in faith finds oneself. At the Tested Adult stage, the tendency is to feel most comfortable in a self-selected class or group. This tends to be a group that shares the meanings of the tested adult.

> [With a confident inner-dependence,] the adult faith can sustain respectful awareness of communities other than its own; it can tolerate, if not embrace, the felt tensions between inevitable choices. . . . [However,] though one's new network of belonging may be much more diverse in some respects, its members may nevertheless hold similar political, religious, and philosophical views and values and share the loyalties of a particular economic class. Even the most cosmopolitan and liberal of mind often discover, upon close examination of their own network of belongings, that those who count are also of like mind. (Parks, 2000, p. 100)

Parks then described the movement of the individual from these homogeneous communities to seeking participation in communities that are open to and seeking others holding views and perspectives different from one's own. This is similar to Fowler's (1981) stage of Conjunctive faith where there is genuine openness to the truths and traditions and communities other than one's own. It is a disciplined openness to truths of those who are "other."

Summary of tested adult and mature adult. "Spiritual development is human development when the latter is conceived according to a particular set of concerns: integrity or wholeness, openness, self-responsibility, and authentic self-transcendence" (Helminiak, 1987, pp. 95-96). The movement toward a mature adult faith is one of greater connection to, interaction with, and belonging to the broader world. It involves a recognition of one's interdependence and interconnectedness with communities and individuals beyond one's perceptual scope. It involves growing comfortable with and actually welcoming the ambiguity and doubt that exists even within one's tested convictions.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCOURSE OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

One's level of cognitive development need not be similar to one's spiritual development, though because they both relate to the development of meaning-making, it is hard to imagine a situation where they would be significantly divergent in an individual. Given the focus on meaning-making, there are many ways in which theories of spiritual development and cognitive development overlap and are mutually informing. However, it is also important to identify the ways in which spiritual development theories focus on particular dimensions or contribute unique elements to our understanding of the process of human development.

Integration of Cognitive, Social, and Affective Dimensions of Development

Love and Love (1995) argued for a greater focus on the integration of the cognitive, social, and affective dimensions of development. To date, no cognitive development theorist has argued against the role of affect and social interaction in development. In fact, Piaget was quite explicit about the role of environment on development. However, the dominant focus in cognitive development theories concerning college students has been on meaning-making and the development of its structures. Parks (2000) argued that spiritual development cannot only focus on the structures of meaning-making and has created a three-part model that incorporates the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Among other student development theorists Kegan (1994) is the only one who actively integrated cognitive, affective, and social dimensions in his theorizing.

Impact of Social and Cultural Context

Again, all theorists to some degree address the role of the environment. However, Parks (2000), Fowler (1996), and Helminiak (1987) actually built it into their theories. The impact of the social and cultural context is seen in Fowler's work by his recognition that starting at the Mythical-Literal Stage of faith development the environment can either serve to contribute to development or can serve to obstruct or retard development. He pointed out that some fundamentalist faith communities (both conservative and liberal) serve to restrict the spiritual development of their members.

Postconventional Forms of Meaning-Making

As Table 1 makes clear, much of the work of the spiritual development theorists in the realm of theorizing about meaning making focuses on the development that occurs beyond "The Great Accommodation." Again, according to at least one theorist (Helminiak, 1987) spiritual development really only begins at that point. Perry's (1970) notion of intellectual and ethical development recognized that much of the focus beyond relativism was on valuing, choosing, commitment—what he termed ethical development. Unfortunately, the last four positions of his model encompassing Commitment in Relativism were the least developed aspects of his theory. As the table shows, those who followed Perry's work, such as Baxter Magolda (1992), Belenky et al. (1986), were no more successful than Perry in elaborating the developmental stages beyond the great accommodation, with each identifying only one stage beyond that point. King and Kitchener (1994) were more successful in identifying three. Parks (2000), Fowler (1981, 1996), and Helminiak (1987) not only differentiated three additional stages beyond the great accommodation (though, as pointed out, Parks's are not very well elaborated), but they also recognized the possibility of development beyond those.

IMPLICATIONS

Practice Implications

Student affairs professionals need to reflect on their own spiritual development. If spirituality and spiritual development is inherent in all people (and not just "religious" people), then student affairs professionals need to consider this developmental process in their own lives. This means considering how they create meaning, purpose, and direction in their lives, the forms of dependence that exist in their relationships, and the types of communities to which they belong.

TABLE 1.
Spiritual Development Theories Compared With Cognitive Development Theories

	Adolescent/ Conventional		Young Adult		Tested Adult	Mature Adult
Forms of Knowing	Authority-bound, Dualistic	Unqualified relativism	?	Probing commitment	Tested commitment	Convictional commitment
Forms of Dependence	Dependent/ Counter-dependent		Fragile Inner-dependence		Confident Inner-dependence	Interdependence
Forms of Community	Conventional	Diffuse	Mentoring Community		Self-selected class/group	Open to Other

Fowler
Mythic-Literal | Synthetic-Conventional | Individuative-Reflective | Conjunctive | Universalizing

Helminiak
Conscientious | Compassionate | Cosmic

Perry
Dualism (1, 2) | Multiplicity (3, 4) | Relativism (5, 6) | Commitment in Relativism (7, 8, 9)

Baxter Magolda
Absolute | Transitional | Independent | Contextual

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule
Silence | Receiv'd | Subjective | Procedural | Constructed

King and Kitchener
Pre-Reflective (1, 2, 3) | Quasi-Reflective (4, 5) | Reflective (6, 7)

The Great Accommodation (Love & Guthrie, 1999)

Differentiate spiritual development from religious practice. Student affairs professionals need to recognize the spiritual aspects of everyday life and not just associate spirituality with religious practice. However, it also means recognizing that religious activity and other spiritually related activities may be manifestations of students searching for meaning and faith.

Focus on the enhancement of students' cognitive development, which will in all likelihood contribute to their spiritual development. Given the close relationship between faith development and cognitive development theory, experiences, activities, and environments that are designed to enhance students' cognitive development will in all likelihood contribute to students' spiritual development as well.

Create mentoring communities and review current student groups and organizations as potential mentoring communities. Parks described the potential of communities to greatly influence the spiritual development of students. In addition to trying to create such communities on campus, student affairs professionals should assess already existing communities to see in what ways they can be encouraged to become mentoring communities.

Research Implications

Given that the spiritual development of college students has been a fairly recent focus in the student affairs literature, a number of issues need to be explored by student affairs researchers.

Explore the intersection and interaction between faith development and cognitive development. In this article I have examined and compared existing research and conceptual work related to cognitive and spiritual development. One of the most important next steps is for research to be conducted specifically looking at both cognitive development and spiritual development in college students to better understand their relationship and mutual influence in individuals.

Explore the interaction between faith/ spiritual development and one's cultural context. Although some research has explored the role of society and culture on cognitive development (Kegan, 1994), not enough cross-cultural research on cognitive development has been conducted (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Kegan, 1994). The same can certainly be said about the study of spiritual development. The need for such research is further heightened by the increasingly global nature of higher education and the college experience. That is, as Western, positivistic culture, characterized by a mind-body split is influenced by Eastern, nonpositivistic culture characterized by mind-body integration, there may very well be an influence on the spiritual development of college students.

CONCLUSION

The work of Sharon Daloz Parks (2000), James Fowler (1981, 1996), and Daniel Helminiak (1987) has reinforced the relationship of spiritual development theories and traditional developmental theories, especially cognitive-structural theories. Both sets of theories have been focused on the ways in which people make meaning of the world they live in and the experiences they have. Parks and Fowler both have contributed ways of viewing issues of the spirit as involved in the developmental experiences of all people, not just those who choose to practice a religion or who participate in nontraditional spiritual practices. Parks especially described the developmental process in such a way that

addresses the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of faith development. Through her framework one can view both the structures and the content of meaning making.

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