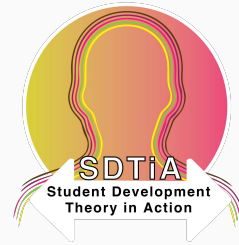


Contemporary Theorizing Exercise



Assignment Rationale

The Student Development Theory in Action (SDTiA) perspective views theory building as an inevitable outcome when educators (e.g., instructors, supervisors, mentors, academic leaders, and student affairs practitioners) are encouraged to critique, refine, and adapt theory in response to changing educational contexts. Accordingly, the Contemporary Theorizing Exercise is a learning activity that emphasizes embedding theory building and practice assessment within the process of translating theory into action, guiding students to move beyond application and actively shape theory in ways that respond to contemporary student realities and the ethical responsibilities of educators.

Assignment Overview

The *Contemporary Theorizing Exercise* builds directly on the *Research a Developmental Issue* and *Develop an Actionable Classroom and/or Practice Intervention* assignments. In the research phase assignment, students examined how a developmental issue has been studied, theorized, and framed within student development scholarship. Then, students designed an intervention, where they applied theory designing a classroom or practice-based response to that developmental issue.

This assignment represents the next step in the learning sequence: moving from theory application to assessing theory in practice, supporting their engagement in theory building. Students are asked to reflect critically on what became visible—and what remained insufficient—when theory was applied, and to reimagine theory in ways that are responsive to contemporary student realities, sociopolitical contexts, and ethical responsibilities. Students will work in Theory Work-Groups to create:

1. A **visual diagram** illustrating their proposed theory.
2. A **handout** summarizing the theory and its implications.
3. A **10-15 minute oral presentation** explaining the theory and its rationale.

Assignment Requirements

The goal is not to produce a finalized theory, but to demonstrate intentional, critical, and ethically grounded engagement in theory building that bridges research, applied practice, and innovative theoretical thinking. To that end, Theory Work-Groups will complete the following:

1. Visual Diagram

The diagram should clearly depict the core components of the proposed theory and:

- Demonstrate how it builds on, revises, or reimagines the original theory or theories from the intervention assignment.
- Address limitations, gaps, or assumptions identified in prior research and theory application.
- Provide a responsive and contextually grounded explanation of the developmental issue within contemporary higher education.

2. Handout (1–2 pages)

The handout should summarize:

- The proposed theory and its key components.
- How the theory addresses gaps, limitations, or assumptions in prior frameworks.
- How the theory functions as a site of meaning-making and ethical responsibility in practice, by addressing at least one guiding question from Duran et al. (2024):
 - Who are college students, and how are their identities, experiences, and needs understood?
 - How are students' developmental journeys situated within and beyond the college environment?
 - How does development occur within larger systems of power and oppression?
 - How do multiple environments influence student development?
 - How can developmental trajectories be challenged or reimagined?

3. Oral Presentation (15 minutes with 10 minutes of Q&A)

The presentation should:

- Present the visual diagram and summarize the proposed theory.
- Explain how the theory emerged from prior research and theory application in practice.
- Highlight how the theory engages meaning-making and ethical responsibility and addresses the selected guiding question(s).

Grading Rubric (100 points)

Category	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement	Points
Visual Diagram	Diagram clearly and creatively represents the proposed theory; shows how it builds on/revises original theory; relationships between components are explicit and logical.	Diagram represents the theory and revisions, but some connections or components lack clarity.	Diagram is partially complete or unclear; relationships between components are limited.	Diagram is missing, incomplete, or does not convey the theory.	20
Handout Content	Handout succinctly summarizes theory, identifies gaps/limitations in prior frameworks, and demonstrates critical engagement with research and intervention findings.	Handout summarizes theory and gaps/limitations but lacks depth or clear connections to prior research/practice.	Handout is incomplete or superficial; connections to prior research/practice are unclear.	Handout is missing or fails to summarize key elements of the theory.	20

Meaning-Making & Ethical Responsibility	Handout and presentation explicitly address how the new theory functions as a site of meaning-making and ethical responsibility; clearly engages at least one Duran et al. guiding question.	Meaning-making and ethical responsibility are addressed but with limited depth or specificity; engages at least one guiding question.	Minimal attention to meaning-making or ethical responsibility; engagement with guiding questions is unclear.	No evidence of meaning-making or ethical responsibility; guiding questions not addressed.	20
Oral Presentation	Clear, confident, and organized delivery; effectively explains theory, rationale, and connections to research and practice.	Delivery is mostly clear; explains theory and rationale but may lack full clarity.	Delivery is uneven or unclear; explanation of theory and rationale is limited.	Presentation is missing or incoherent; fails to explain theory or rationale.	20
Integration & Critical Thinking	Demonstrates strong critical reflection, synthesis of research, theory application, and intervention insights; theory building is well-reasoned, innovative, and grounded in context.	Demonstrates moderate critical reflection and synthesis; theory building shows some insight and connection to context.	Limited critical reflection synthesis; theory building is underdeveloped or poorly connected to context.	Little to no critical reflection; theory building is missing or irrelevant.	20