

Faith Formation in Business Students: Three Models Compared

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Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to extend the ongoing discussion on how the scholarship of CFBA (and CCCU) colleagues on faith integration will extend into empirical work, specifically in the discipline of business. Along these lines, discussion of the Martinez model has been very fruitful in delineating different domains of faith integration scholarship in business (Martinez, 2004). Of particular interest to me is where we will root our theories of student faith formation. Will we test existing theories that are rooted in secular student development theory? Will we customize secular theory to fit Christian students? Will we initiate new theory from Biblical sources?

I wrestled with these epistemological questions when I set out to design an empirical study of faith formation in Christian business students. My immediate goal was to understand the dynamics of faith integration better by reviewing the literature from both Christian and secular sources, in order to assess the full array of research resources at hand. Ultimately, I hope that fuller understanding of how our learners grow in faith will inform pedagogy in Christian business programs. (Linkages between spirituality and learning are often more assumed than proven, however, a recent dissertation at Azusa Pacific connects spirituality dynamically to learning in college (Green, 2005).)

Introduction

On the occasion of the installation of Gaylen Byker as the new President of Calvin College, Richard Mouw delivered a sermon entitled “The Maturity Mandate” (1996). He began with Ephesians 4:13. He noted how this verse is preceded by the list of spiritual gifts for Christian service, such as evangelism, pastoring, teaching, and prophecy. Because it is set in this context, he saw Ephesians 4:13 as the “job description that the apostle connects to the exercise of these gifts: we must equip God’s people for service in such a way that we may all ‘come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the full stature of Christ’” (1996, pp. 1-2).

In this way, Mouw presented the college with what he called the Maturity Mandate, to “educate in a way that people will move toward attaining the measure of the full stature of Christ” (1996, p. 2). He urged the college to see this growth in Christ as both intensive and extensive: intensive in terms of growing closer in intimacy with the Son of God; extensive in terms of “growing in our awareness of the extent of his power and authority” (1996, p. 2). I will build on the theological scaffolding in Ephesians laid by Mouw to introduce the topic of faith formation in business students.

Researching Faith Formation: Christian and Secular Sources

As I embarked on researching exactly how students grow in Christ, I sought a theoretical model based in empirical research. I first explored Christian sources. Shelves of books have been written on nurturing faith in young men and women, but they come primarily from a pastoral perspective, and hence lack an empirical approach.

CCCU colleagues in psychology, as Yvonne Smith points out, have developed a body of work on the faith integration process over the past 25 years (Smith, 2005). Some

conceived inventive new conceptual frameworks and instruments, based on their Christian experience of faith formation. These inventors may refer to secular theory, but do not explicitly root their theory in secular thought.

Their inventions include the Spiritual Transformation Inventory (STI). It takes a snapshot of the status of closeness to Christ for both individual students and institutions, and can provide a sense of the amount and type of transformative experiences that nurture such a close relationship. Hence, the STI is a good assessment tool for measuring a student's intensive faith formation, as Mouw terms it. It does not, however, claim to research how the process of spiritual development works. Nor does it examine the process of integrating faith in a discipline, what Mouw calls the extensive growth of "going deep" with Christ.

A second group of Christian scholars in psychology dug deeply into the dynamics of spiritual growth by utilizing classic spiritual and moral development theories from the secular academy. The journal *Research in Christian Higher Education* published on average at least one such study a year for eight years. They are high-quality empirical studies. More importantly, they evidence biblical purposes and principles throughout their theorymaking. In order to appreciate their contribution, it may be helpful to review some of the secular theories they drew upon.

Theories of Spiritual Development from the Secular Academy

To find formal theories of faith formation that have been tested empirically, Christian scholars look to the secular academy, where student development theory has matured. The classic, empirically-based theoretical models of student spiritual development studied the general student population rather than targeting Christian

students. At first, I doubted the usefulness of theories of faith formation that were disassociated from biblical thought, but I found hints of Christian background in at least some of the more recent classic theorists, such as Fowler and Parks.

Student Spiritual and Moral Development

The study of student development is a subset of the larger domain of human development. Student development was defined by King and Fields (1980) as the development of students, specifically those in a postsecondary context.

The classic theorist in student development, Chickering (1993), held that the main purpose of higher education should be human development. He initiated the view now known as the “student development point of view,” now widely accepted despite heavy attacks early on. In 1969, after reviewing prior research and studying students’ written self-assessments, he developed a model of seven vectors of student development, to describe his findings on the ways in which students grow during their college years.

His 1969 study included only male traditional undergraduates. He has since corrected his model to include the findings of later studies that included women, by deepening his developing integrity vector to allow for female students’ interrelational interpretations of reality. His 1993 extension of his work (with Reisser) depended on Pascarella and Terenzini’s 1991 synthesis of more than 2,600 research studies done since Chickering’s original work. The Chickering model of student development has been applied widely, thanks to its broad conceptual nature. Its stages, loosely chronological and hierarchical, allow practitioners to bring their own interpretations into the model and apply it in different contexts. The Chickering model has aided student affairs

administrators in their understanding and assessment of the development of the whole student.

Chickering's seventh vector of student development is the most relevant to spiritual and moral development. Developing integrity has three sequential but overlapping stages: 1) humanizing values, or balancing self-interest with the interests of others; 2) personalizing values, or owning one's own core values while respecting those of others; and 3) developing congruence, or bringing owned values in line with social responsibility. Chickering's model is highly generalized to fit any undergraduate education context, and hence is not tailored to fit the nuances of the spiritual and moral growth of Christian students.

King and Fields divided student development into four areas: intellectual, identity, interpersonal, and values development (King, 1980). They defined values development more closely: Values development concerns "the formation of moral and ethical principles to guide one's life, the way a person defines his or her own role in society in terms of one's social ideals" (p. 545). King and Fields listed the following as characteristics of an individual with mature values development: "Basing one's moral actions on personal values and beliefs; having self-chosen ethical principles that appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency; respecting the value of the lives and rights of others; and having a clear, consistent commitment to a set of values" (King, 1980)). King and Fields set moral development into its student development context. The term "values development" is not prevalent in the literature, however.

"Moral development" is the prevalent term in the literature. Not a few theorists neglect to define the term. Roels (1990) not only critiques several definitions but states

why she prefers Shelton's definition. Roels examined curricula of religiously-based colleges and universities. She found that curricula were not geared sufficiently to foster student moral development for upperclassmen. She compared definitions of "moral development" by Kohlberg, Chickering, Heath, and Shelton, and decided that Shelton's definition was the most comprehensive.

According to Roels, Shelton defined the morally developed student as one who can answer the following questions: "1) To what am I committed? 2) Why am I committed to it? 3) How important is this commitment to me? 4) Do my behaviors manifest this commitment? 5) Am I still growing in this commitment?" (Shelton qtd. in Roels, p. 3) She described student moral development theory, critiqued current curricula of religiously-affiliated institutions, and outlined her recommended revisions. Her analysis provided rationale and context for future study of pedagogical dynamics.

In the extensive body of literature on the development of students that has grown since Chickering's original study, the work of Perry (1997) is centrifugal to any discussion of moral development—others typically expand upon and critique his work. He used the term "ethical development" to describe the moral growth processes his team observed in longitudinal interviews with traditional undergraduate students, first only men at Harvard in 1955, and later women at Radcliffe. Using a grounded-theory approach, his team derived a schema of stages of moral development: 1) dualism modified; 2) relativism discovered; 3) commitments in relativism developed. The team approach reduced the impact of individual observer biases, because they reviewed each others' interpretations of student statements. Perry's subsequent reflections on his schema in light of subsequent works by Fowler, Kohlberg, and Gilligan have confirmed his

findings. Perry's later reflections indicate an iterative helix-like process of recursive growth. Perry's work documented the ways cognitive processes are tied to moral development. His model of expected growth has aided pedagogy design.

Kohlberg (1967) delineated six stages of development of moral judgment observed in individuals from childhood, into adolescence and adulthood: Stage 1--obedience and punishment orientation; Stage 2—naively egoistic orientation; Stage 3—good-boy orientation; Stage 4—authority and social-order maintaining orientation; Stage 5—contractual legalistic orientation; Stage 6—conscience or principle orientation. He viewed development as sequential and at times regressive, through these stages. His cognitive-developmental approach arose from comparing the work of Piaget, Fromm, Baldwin, and others. His work was not based in a higher-education setting, and normally only the last three stages would apply to college-age subjects. However, Kohlberg's work is one of the key theories from which any study of student moral development would benefit. According to Rest (1979), Kohlberg's research method was to present ten-to-sixteen-year-old subjects with two moral dilemmas and interview them about what they would do and why.

Using Kohlberg's stages, Rest (1979) developed an instrument to assess the stages of development evidenced by a student or population of students. He formalized Kohlberg's moral dilemma cases into a series of survey questions. Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) is a validated research method for assessing moral judgment that assesses students' progress along Kohlberg's stages. The DIT is readily administered and scored, and has resulted in highly comparable data comprising a substantial body of findings in

moral judgment. Studies in the Journal of Christian Higher Education used the DIT to assess Christian students.

Because a student's moral construct is developed within the context of the student's spiritual understanding, I picture theories of moral development as nested within theories of spiritual development. Fowler (1981) is a Christian minister and theologian doing research on spiritual development. He developed a theory on "growth in faith." He described faith as Niebuhr did: "the search for an overarching, integrating, and grounding trust in a center of value and power sufficiently worthy to give our lives unity and meaning." His theory was based on comparing the individual development theories of Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg. Unlike Kohlberg, Fowler did not separate faith from moral reasoning. Fowler's stages 1-6 were sequential after infancy and undifferentiated faith: 1) intuitive-projective faith (imagination; imitative of parents); 2) mythic-literal faith (unity in story; fairness); 3) synthetic-conventional faith (faith based on others' view); 4) individuative-reflective faith (forming one's own world view); 5) conjunctive faith (alive to paradox; serves others); 6) universalizing faith (rare--selfless sacrifice). An iterative-retroactive process causes rethinking of earlier stages as each higher stage is breached. I find Fowler's stages 3-5 particularly useful to any study of spiritual development of traditional undergraduate college students. Fowler's construct of spiritual growth serves an alternative to Kohlberg that has the added feature of incorporating a student's spiritual formation into the picture of his or her moral development.

Sharon Parks built an addition into Fowler's house. She added a phase during the young adult stage to specifically reflect the college years. She felt that Fowler's model

made an abrupt jump from adolescence to adulthood. She inserted a young adult stage between adolescence and adulthood. Like Fowler's, her theory is based on not only traditional student development theory but also her own experience as a minister, teacher, and counselor to young adults (Chickering, 2006).

Despite their usefulness, theories rooted in secular sources often clash with Christian thought and experience, from the outset in their definitions of terms. Because secular attempts to define faith or spirituality are universalistic, they inevitably miss crucial particularities of Christian experience. For example, Patrick Love, a prominent scholar of student spiritual development, separates spirituality from religion. Spirituality is a search for meaning, wholeness, and purpose in life, whereas religion ultimately involves doctrine and dogma, according to Love. He defines faith, synonymous with spirituality, as "trying to make sense of the 'big picture,' trying to find an overall sense of meaning and purpose in one's life"(2002, p. 358). How is such development more spiritual than philosophical? Parks defines spirituality in terms of a search for meaning that looks to the spirit as "the animating essence at the core of life" (as cited in Love, 2000, p.16). Her definition is helpful in that it pushes the analysis toward spirit as the essence of life. In contrast, Christian definitions of faith formation can do more than describe a search for meaning that places spirit at the center. We can draw on rich Biblical descriptions of spiritual growth processes such as transformation into the image of Christ, discipleship, or sanctification.

A theory of human development, because it is theorized by a human, can only reflect the theorist's ability to grasp each level of spiritual enlightenment that he or she proposes. Kohlberg, Fowler, and Parks theorized that maturity is a process of moving

from dualistic thinking to an inclusion of paradox, then to a universalistic spirituality. A universalistic ideal is antithetical to Christian theology, and hence problematic for the study of Christian faith formation. Interestingly, secular-based studies, including Pizzolato (2003) noted contrary results for respondents with high religiosity or strong Christian beliefs (J. E. Pizzolato, personal conversation, March 22, 2005). Not surprisingly, in my pilot test of these classic models, a Christian student faced with the binary choice of accepting or rejecting the model as reflecting his own growth, had to reject on the basis of the universalist acme.

An Excellent, Explicitly Christian Model

Bovee and O'Brian (2004) have implemented their model at Roberts Wesleyan College Division of Business. They do not build on, nor do they refer to classic models of student moral development. Their sole empirical basis stems from a longitudinal study of Christian students by R. J. Webb, using the Miner Sentence Completion Scale to measure motivation to lead, which is one of their several desired outcomes. Their model centers on themes for each of the four years of undergraduate business study, meant to produce several desired outcomes, such as responsibility, accountability, purpose and passion. Four curricular (and cocurricular) tracks build on each other, beginning in the freshman year and culminating in the senior year. Under this curriculum, freshmen focus on building confidence, and carry these lessons through the ensuing years. Sophomores build integrity in their moral standards, and continue the next three years. Juniors develop academic excellence, and bring it to fruition in their final year. Seniors become servant leaders, giving to others.

This model has excellent attributes. It is firmly grounded in Christian values, appropriate to Roberts Wesleyan College. It is outcomes-based; what is more, the authors mention innovative methods for assessing their ambitious outcomes. It merges cocurricular experiences with classroom learning. Most laudable from my view is its integration of moral development. Scholars in psychology at Roberts Wesleyan have contributed to the body of empirical work in Research on Christian Education—which may have influenced the theoretical bases for curricular reform in the business program, both implicitly and explicitly.

Three Models for Empirical Study

Assuming that the effectiveness of pedagogy is strengthened by a fuller understanding of how student moral development connects with learning, I desire to conduct research on the moral development of Christian students.

The research instrument will be given to freshman and junior students, in order to draw a comparison between the two cohorts, and to allow for longitudinal study of class cohorts. Studies of moral development which are based on the classic models often show evidence of growth during the college years, especially among seniors. For this reason, the longitudinal analysis may be the most fruitful. I select business students, that is, students enrolled in the business program, because business is a highly applied field, hence, application of moral and ethical learning may be more evident than in more theoretical fields. This study is conducted at a CCCU institution, because CCCU institutions are intentional about faith integration (Kuh).

The research instrument will be in two parts, taken together. The first section will present three vignettes (below) that describe each of three models of faith integration.

The second part is a series of individual statements which reflect components of theories by Kohlberg, Fowler, Parks, Baxter Magolda and Pizzolato. My goal is to determine which elements of these spiritual development models resonate most closely with the self-reporting of business students.

Model One: Vocation

John Finds His Calling

As a teenager, John read his Bible often and prayed. His prayers began to include requests for guidance regarding a vocation in business. His ideas of vocation in business were what he gained from parents, family, church, and/or Christian schooling. As he grew more mature, he began to critique and analyze the faith he had inherited. At times, he resisted the complete authority of his inherited belief system in the business world. He began to view other faiths as at least partially valid in how they relate to the business world.

A major step in maturing his faith was to own it for himself. He wanted to be recognized for who he was and who he was becoming. He had support from mentors, old and new, in developing his own convictions about how to conduct business. He made a commitment to his new view of himself as a Christian in business. He preferred to associate with others of similar belief, so he joined a Christian Business Breakfast Club. His openness to the people of other faiths was only within the boundaries defined by his Christian faith.

As John matured even more, he became comfortable associating with people outside his faith. He joined Rotary Club, where he was very active. He became

able to cope with ambiguities and paradoxes in the Christian faith, while still keeping his convictions.

This model is essentially an empirically-validated secular theory that is firmly rooted in classic student development theory -- the college-years stages of Parks' model. Parks' model is based not only on her own empirical work, but Fowler's as well, which is based on the previous classics. Her model provides a clear and focused picture of spiritual development during the college years.

The elements of the young adult stage are personified using the theme of vocation. In this way, the vignette is tailored to Christian students. Also, any hint of Fowler's universalism was subtracted. Finding a vocation is a prominent theme in Reformed circles, which makes the vignette accessible to my students. (More detailed survey questions separate out the vocational aspect, such that it will be possible to analyze the two elements separately.)

Model Two: Victory

Susan Grows a Legacy

Susan made a commitment to Christ by accepting salvation. More and more, she wanted Christ to matter in different areas of her life, including her business life. She decided to apply biblical thought to her business life, first, by avoiding sin and second, by feeling the need to share the gift of salvation with coworkers. Some of her initial efforts went well, some did not. She also focused on charitable giving from her earnings. She began to want to live all of her business life for God's purposes. She became concerned that her company did not always

have values that matched her own, and Susan tried ways to navigate that difference. She desired more and more to mature throughout her lifetime in her faith in her business life. She began to find ways to change her company for the better, in ways that reflected her inner convictions. She matured to the point that she was looking for ways to pass on to the next generation what she learned.

The Victory Model derives purely from Christian sources. Susan's story is my attempt to express Mouw's concept of extensive growth in the form of fictional narrative. The dynamic of this model is territorial, along the lines of Abraham Kuyper's claim of the world for Christ: "There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not say, 'This is mine! This belongs to me!'" (Mouw, 1996). Like the Reformed tradition that Kuyper represents, this model is intended to exemplify progressive, personal victories for Christ—in essence, the process of sanctification, dedicating one's life to God.

This model derives mainly from the evangelical tract, "My Heart, Christ's Home." This short piece elaborated a metaphor that was powerful in my own growth in Christ. It spurred the reader to invite Christ not only into the well-kept living room of their heart, but progressively into the more workaday and the more private rooms. Both Kuyper and the evangelical tract argue for extensive maturity that stretches to include all of life. I attempted to fit this extensive model to the faith formation of business students by laying out in progressive fashion the various ways that business students could conceive of integrating their faith with their business lives.

Model Three: Decision

Mike's Defining Moment

Mike benefited from Christian schools and college in terms of much food for thought on faith integration in business. He thought about the person he would become, and mulled over his choices.

But he did not own faith integration in business for himself until he was faced with a decision with only two choices: either comply with his boss and falsify sales reports, or lose his job. In this defining moment, he had to decide which fork in the road to take. He had support from mentors, but he had to analyze the implications and choose for himself. This choice provoked him to decide which person he would become.

He made his choice, and committed to it. This defining-moment choice determined the way he operated in the business world from then on.

The Defining Moments model was inspired by a cutting-edge theory rooted in the secular academy. Jane Pizzolato researched how at-risk students developed self-authorship. Pizzolato is working along the lines of previous research by Baxter Magolda in the identity theory branch of student development theory. Pizzolato found that student growth into defining self-identity was spurred by provocative experiences. Such experiences “disrupted students’ equilibrium such that they felt compelled to consider and begin to construct new conceptions of self”(Pizzolato, 2003).

Her findings resonated with theorizing on defining moments by my colleagues in the business program at Calvin College, as well as the self-reporting of alumni. I began to see defining moments in the biographies of Christian business leaders as well. Stacy

Jackson pointed me to work that Randy Kilgore did for Marketplace Network, a non-profit ministry with a mission to “motivate and equip Christians to apply faith to work.” Kilgore lays out a detailed network of key moments in business practice where our decisions can both form and reflect our Christian identity (Kilgore, 2002). I look forward to communicating with him on the empirical basis of his conceptual model.

Opportune Time, Opportune Place

The time is ripe for deeper study of how students experience faith formation. American higher education leaders refer to the quarterly *Trends in Higher Education* to “check their radar” for emerging trends. In February 2006, this publication gave second billing to the recent high enrollment growth of Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) schools, which has been faster than all other four-year campuses. The Trends Report also cited recent research by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. According to HERI, about 70 percent of the general student population surveyed say that they believe in “a god,” pray, and go to religious services. In addition, the HERI survey indicated that many of these spiritually-oriented students expect higher education to develop them spiritually in terms of their self-understanding, personal values, and expression of spirituality.

The enduring core mission of CCCU members is the faith formation of students, as is evident in the CCCU mission statement: “To advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth.” Its 105 North American members and 74 affiliates in 25 countries constitute an international association of institutions committed to “intentionally Christian” higher education. The CCCU Advance reported in Fall 2005

that not only is spirituality in high demand in the general student population, but also annual student satisfaction surveys of CCCU students show high and increasing importance of spirituality, and CCCU students are more satisfied each year with how their campus experience contributes to their spiritual growth. In addition, Dr. Gary Railsback of George Fox University found in research he conducted through HERI that CCCU students keep their faith during their college years more than any other institution type (Green, 2005).

Empiricism and Epistemology

Yvonne Smith related a history of the work done by CBFA on faith integration in business, and pointed to CBFA's recent intentional reach into empirical work (Smith, 2005). She expressed the expectation that empirical research will reveal the truth of Scripture. The relationship between scientific research and Scripture is delineated in the epistemological choices made by the researcher, and by CBFA collectively. She asks, and I believe this is a central question for empirical research, if business theory contradicts Scripture, which truth trumps the other?

I find a prioritization laid out by Plantinga for theological work helpful to my theorizing in business and economics: "In terms of the sources of theology, then, Reformed theology draws on the following in descending order: scripture; the traditions of the church; reason and experience" (Plantinga, 2002). Unlike the Scholastic tradition, which places reason equal to Scripture, the Reformed tradition has a high view of Scripture, placing it above reason. This ordering is partly due to a Calvinist understanding of the fallen nature of human reason.

So, according to Plantinga, empirical evidence comes in dead last in the epistemological order. Chronologically, however, for the Christian scholar, theorizing is the product of inspiration. Richard Chewning's description of the faith integration process begins with his emphasis on the part taken by the Holy Spirit (Chewning, 2001). He rightly sets forth Bible study, contemplation, prayer, and iterative Bible study as practices that foster inspiration. Such practices also help to us to effectively sift our experiences for nuggets of inspiration.

Shouldn't an epistemology that places experience last pose problems for empirical research? Perhaps because I am a social scientist, and not a physical scientist, I have not run into any instance of empirical evidence itself directly contradicting Scripture. I often observe cases where I think that the theorist's nonbiblical presuppositions lead to nonbiblical interpretations, but the data itself does not run counter to Scripture as I understand Scripture.

I am interested in continuing the conversation on epistemology in CBFA as part of the work in meta-theory called for by Smith (Smith, 2005). This will be especially important for the growing number of colleagues in CBFA teaching in secular institutions who wrestle with how to present to a secular audience a Scriptural epistemology, and for CBFA colleagues presenting their scholarship in the secular academy. For my work, a key action item is to explore how to express the value of millennia of anecdotal evidence faithfully recorded in Scripture. I suggest that we may find room in the secular academy for this discussion by utilizing epistemology and methodology from disciplines such as cultural anthropology, where the legitimacy of cultural tradition is valued.

Smith's call for meta-analysis includes deepening our understanding of faith integration itself. Such deepening involves honing our definitions and understanding its components, its processes, and its "microprocesses" (J. E. Pizzolato, personal conversation, March 22, 2005). Richard Mouw called upon the Calvin College community to take on the task of faith integration in ways that go deep into the academic disciplines: "Go deep, so that we may all 'come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the full stature of Christ'" (Mouw, 1996).

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