

each student's cognitive developmental level. The assessments correlated well with student ability; the poor student was in early multiplicity, the average student was in late multiplicity, and the excellent student was in early relativism. In order to help the professor understand that each of these students had different abilities to do problem solving, a written report that paralleled the developmental clues workshop was prepared (Stonewater & Shrock, 1982). The report included a brief review of the theory, an extensive description of each student based on the developmental clues from the interviews, and a listing of instructional strategies that might be appropriate for the students in helping them move to the next cognitive developmental level.

The result of this project was that the professor decided to begin designing instruction specifically geared to students' cognitive developmental levels. Additionally, the professor reported that he was more aware of individual differences in cognitive development and he attempted to relate his lectures to students at different developmental levels.

Academic Advising Training — After learning the Perry scheme, two advisors in an academic advising unit at the previously mentioned university felt that some limited knowledge of the theory would assist their advisor colleagues. They constructed a matrix indicating typical comments (clues) that students might make in certain advising-related situations at four of the Perry stages most typical of their clientele (Lanchester, Oakey & Stonewater, 1981). Their colleagues found this most helpful in determining such things as the student's need for "right" answers, how much diversity the student could comprehend, how much structure and direction the student needed, and what kind of classroom setting might be most appropriate for the student. Again, as before, the advising staff invested a relatively small amount of time but gained a great deal of insight that was valuable in helping students.

CONCLUSION

The previous examples are only three of many ways that a basic understanding of the Perry scheme can increase the faculty member's or student personnel practitioner's understanding of how students think about their world, and can help translate that understanding into more effective communication. Several suggestions are made for the student personnel administrator who has a staff that might benefit from "basic training" in Perry's theory. First, if there is someone on the staff or in the institution who has the background, that person could be asked to provide the staff with such training using the developmental clues approach, perhaps as part of a staff development program. A second approach, if there is not someone on the campus with sufficient background, is to ask staff members to do some basic reading (King, 1978; Perry, 1981; Stonewater & Stonewater, 1980; Widick, 1977), then work as a staff to train each other in understanding developmental clues. A third possibility is to utilize an outside person skilled in this kind of training, then plan follow-up within the staff.

While a somewhat superficial understanding of Perry's cognitive development theory can by no means solve communication problems with students nor immediately provide a magical understanding of our work, perhaps it can provide us with a useful tool. Student personnel professionals who have been uninterested in getting on the "theory bandwagon" will perhaps agree that it is not necessary to reorient an entire professional outlook to utilize developmental theory to inform and improve professional practice.