# Adult Development and Theological Field Education

## Lorraine Ste-Marie

The overall goal of theological field education is to equip adult learners for effective pastoral leadership. In order to achieve that goal, not only must theological field education be a space for learners to acquire specific skills and knowledge, but it must also attend to their development as adult learners. Although the formation and education of religious leaders has always been about the development of adults; the connections between the two perspective are often more implicit than explicit.[1] This separation is understandable, given the fact that the notions of adult development and adult learning are still fairly new, and it is only recently that we have started to make explicit connections between the two.[2]

My own interest in adult development and pastoral leadership education was originally fueled by my own lack of an adequate conceptual framework to face the challenges in working with the action-reflection model of learning. I needed a way to understand why some learners were more capable than others of reflecting on, and learning from, their pastoral experience. My conceptual tools for assessing and supporting their development were

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inadequate for the seriousness of the task. This lack has led me through a decade of exploration into the connection between adult development theory and my experience in pastoral leadership education. I began by exploring the connection between Robert Kegan's adult developmental framework and the learning tool used by Lisa Lahey and Kegan that enabled learners to uncover and overcome their own hidden resistances to change.[3] In 2007, this research led me to discover and begin working with Otto Laske's Constructive-Developmental Framework (CDF),[4] which integrates the Kegan model and offers a more comprehensive and variegated perspective for thinking about and attending to adult development in the process of ministerial formation. Kegan's stage development theory is the most widely-used in professional leadership development today,[5] along with his substantive work in the area of immunity to change,[6] I have found that Laske's framework offers the educator important tools for assessing learners' throughout their development. I will briefly summarize Laske's adult development theory later in the essay.

## Survey of Developmental Needs in Theological Field Education

In order to discover what my colleagues in theological field education were thinking about the developmental needs of students, I conducted an online survey with members of the Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE) in early 2010. I wanted to identify the range of developmental issues they were dealing with in the professional education of pastoral leaders. The survey consisted of 21 questions, some of which were multiple-choice, while others asked for explicit comments or examples. Participants could choose more than one response to the multiple choice questions. (See Appendix I for the questionnaire.) Out of 100 potential participants, I had a 30 percent response rate.[7] Respondents represented theological field education programs in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, in which the cohort size ranged from 10 to over 100. Also, they represent a broad range of Protestant denominations, as well as the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions. In this article, I address only the questions that refer directly to the experience of developmental needs in the theological field education program.

**Question:** In your experience, what are the most pressing developmental needs for candidates in ministry?
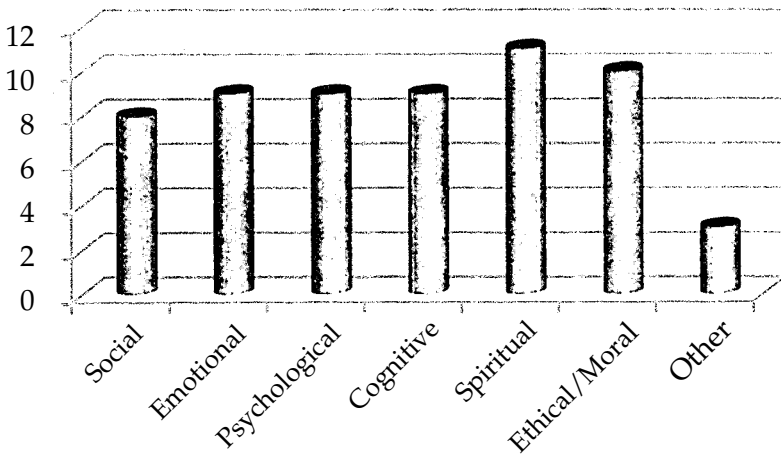
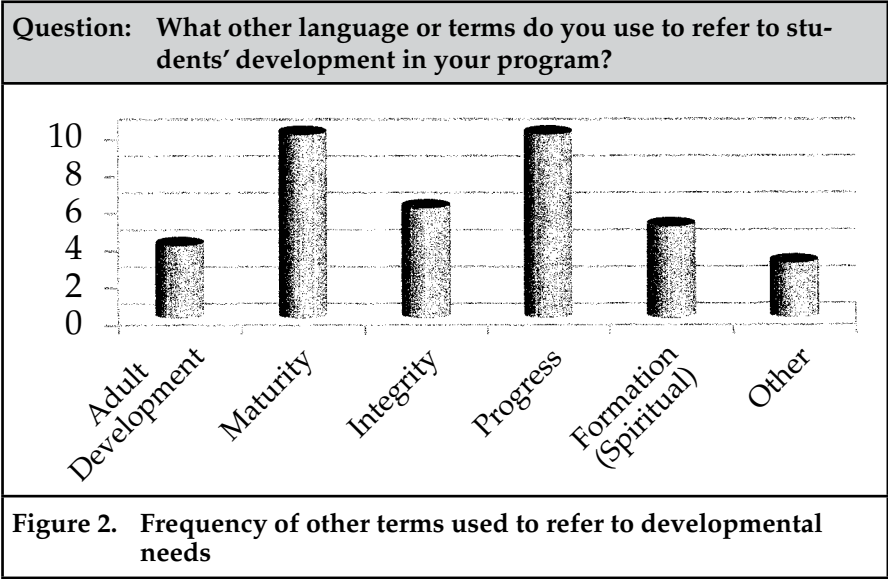**Figure 1: Most pressing developmental needs in candidates for ministry**

As noted in Figure 1, the responses show a fairly even distribution amongst all the developmental needs cited, with a slightly higher percentage of spiritual needs. All participants chose more than one category, some of whom checked all of them. The responses to the "other" category listed developmental needs in relation to leadership, psycho-sexual identity, vocational call, identity, acculturation, and integration.

**Question:** Give examples of how learners demonstrate the developmental needs in the areas they identified.

- *Social Development.* The need for social development among ministry students is evident in the lack of self-awareness regarding their impact on others. Patterns of relating that polarize people, avoid or heighten conflict and foster dependency are additional signs of inadequate social development. The inability to read situations and respond appropriately and the absence of initiative were included under this category.

- *Emotional development* issues were identified as anger, little sense of emotional or physical boundaries, lack of empathy, an inability to read situations and respond appropriately as well as a reluctance to take responsibility for one's own learning. This was particularly true for students from non-Western cultures.

- *Psychological development* included difficulty in adapting to the dynamics of new environments, a struggle to manage time and finances, and a persistent need for affirmation for performing well. In addition, respondents included

reference to depression and personal woundedness as signs of diminished psychological development.

- The absence of *Cognitive Development* was reported as the inability to integrate Scripture into ministerial practice, lack of theological clarity, or the incapacity to analyze a contextual problem. Difficulty in understanding assignments, dogmatism, literalism, or the lack of mental templates to reflect upon what they already know and are learning were linked to cognitive development. So also the inclination to provide set answers to ministry needs without working them through to an integrated response.

- *Spiritual Development* issues among students included the absence of trust in their vocational calling, the inability to connect the Gospel to their own self-worth, and pragmatic emphasis on getting a job and title rather than growing into relationship with God. In a number of ways, the lack of a habit of spiritual discipline was reported as a sign of insufficient spiritual development.

- *Ethical/moral Development* was regarded as problematic because of lying, plagiarism, and other instances of cheating, boundary issues, and generally little clarity about being more "ethical." Learners had difficulty articulating rationale behind actions and beliefs.

| Question:  What other language or terms do you use to refer to students' development in your program? |
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| Figure 2.  Frequency of other terms used to refer to developmental needs |
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As Figure 2 shows, the terms "maturity" or "progress" are the most frequently used to refer to developmental needs. In the "other" category, participants referred to terms such as personal and professional identity formation, integration, readiness for ministry, and spiritual formation. Contrary to the earlier question noted in Figure 1, I intentionally added the term "adult develop-

ment" to see if the participants would make some connections with this term and the developmental needs they had already identified. This term was the used least. One participant explained the reluctance to refer to adult development this way: "Many of our candidates come to [their theological studies] after adult experiences such as parenting and other responsible employment, so we don't often refer to adult development." In contrast to that comment, another participant felt this was an important term: "I think we need to continue, and even deepen, our vigilance about finding and utilizing learning strategies and tools that attend to adult development effectively."

**Question: In your experience what is the connection between a student's developmental level and his or her capacity for theological reflection?**

All but one respondent named a strong correlation between learners' development and their capacity for theological reflection. The responses described that connection in the following ways:

- There is a mutual relationship between the two that can either be positive or negative. In order to do theological reflection, learners need to have attained a particular level of maturity.

- Where students are more able to critique themselves and their practice of ministry, they are more able to do theological reflection.

- Students who have integrity and who are self-aware typically are able to provide superior theological reflection.

- The connection between adult development and theological reflection is critical. The ability of the student to reflect theologically is essential. The [theological field] education course becomes the crucible where students integrate personal, professional, and theological understandings.

- One response included concrete reference to an intelligent male learner, who readily grasps theological concepts, but the theological notions are not yet grounded in the reality of his relationships and life. Theology is, at this point for him, 'a world of ideas' rather than a framework out of which to live and relate and grow.

These responses were presented in a workshop format at the 31st Biennial Consultation of the ATFE, held in January 2011.[8] These findings, along with the feedback from the participants in that workshop, have given me an important lens for thinking about the necessity of adult development theory within theological field education. It is necessary because without an explicit connection between the two, we will continue to dwell on learning skills and behaviors without taking into account the learners' developmental attributes that contribute to their emerging professional competence. The fol-

lowing quote from Garrett McAuliffe captures the essence of this concern in all forms of professional education:

> The fates of organizations and human lives can rely on the competence of professionals who make judgments and take actions under conditions of uncertainty. It is imperative, therefore, that the requirements for professional competence be delineated, so initial professional education and ongoing training match those requisites. Developmental capacity, or stage, is one of those conditions, as professional work requires a high level of complexity that comes with increasing developmental capacity."[9]

An explicit connection between adult development and field education is necessary, but not sufficient, because no theory can explain the complexity of the human person living in relationship to the Transcendent. Because the human person is a mystery, we use insights and scientific empirical tools cautiously. Despite these limitations, I propose that adult development theory can make a significant contribution to understanding how learners in theological field education might grow into the fullness of their potential in response to their respective calls to pastoral leadership.

I have found the Constructive-Developmental Framework (CDF) developed by Otto Laske to be a significant heuristic device for understanding many (but not all) of the developmental challenges reported in the survey. The CDF is an innovative approach to adult development in that it incorporates insights from a variety of theoretical perspectives on adult development. Together, these offer a unique framework for assessing and supporting developmental needs. In my own work, I have found the CDF to be comprehensive and practical enough to re-frame many, but not all, of the reported needs listed above and provide educational strategies for working with those needs. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of that framework and then examine in-depth two dimensions of CDF that illustrate how it can offer a new perspective for thinking about developmental learning needs in the formation for ministry.

#### THE CONSTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK (CDF)

As its name suggests, this framework is based on an approach to adult development that refers to the social constructing that occurs in individuals as they learn. Building on the insights of Jean Piaget and others, this approach recognizes that all humans are on a developmental trajectory in which we construct our own reality through structures of meaning. These structures are not static but rather have the potential to change through a process of qualitative shifts. The expectation is that because of these changes, individuals will

increase in depth and complexity throughout a lifetime. As educators who use the action-reflection model of learning are aware, developmental learning can be challenging and even threatening to learners when it calls into question the internal logic that holds their ways of knowing in place. In this approach to adult development, the overriding theme is balance or 'equilibrium' as Piaget coined it. Encountering complexity can sometimes feel like losing balance. Increased complexity and uncertainty in our environment may prompt us to ignore what does not fit into our current structures or we can enter into a change process by first recognizing the limitations of structures that have previously provided meaning in our lives. Once we acknowledge those limitations, we may be open to critiquing and transforming them in order to gain a more inclusive way of understanding ourselves and the world.

Otto Laske's Constructive-Developmental Framework (CDF) adapts and integrates a number of adult developmental theories to offer a systemic view of adult development in which there are three primary meaning structures: (1) social-emotional, (2) cognitive, and (3) psychological. The structures of meaning through which we construct reality are referred to as Frames of Reference (FoR) which seek to maintain equilibrium in all three dimensions of the learner's developmental trajectory. Each Frame of Reference asks a different question:

1. Social-emotional: What should I do and for whom?
2. Cognitive: What can I do and what are my options?
3. Psychological: How am I doing?

The writer Anaïs Nin captures the truth about constructing our world with these words: "We don't see things as they are, we see them as *we are*."[10] At every stage of our development, we all have a certain lack of self-awareness about how we frame meaning. For theological field educators, it is important to increase our awareness of our *current* FoR so that we can reflect upon it, question or critique it, lest we repeat our same interpretations and practices. In this article, I briefly describe particular characteristics of the first two dimensions of the CDF that enable us to re-frame some of the developmental issues named in the survey.

### Social-Emotional Profile: "What Should I Do And For Whom?"

Throughout their preparation for ministry, learners are in relationship with a number of persons from a variety of communities. How they answer the question "What should I do and for whom?" will depend on their level of social-emotional development. The social-emotional profile in CDF is

based on Robert Kegan's constructive-development theory that consists of five principle stages that determine our mode of functioning in the social world.[11] As with the developmental trajectory in general, as we reach higher levels we shed more and more of our subjectivity and acquire a larger and larger objectivity, including a deeper understanding of self-in-relation to others. Our progression is realized through a series of four transitions that follow a developmental pattern of recurring incremental steps in which we become more and more aware that our *current* experience or problems no longer fit our *current* meaning-making structures. The CDF helps us to pay attention to how learners are giving evidence of their *current* or operative level in the developmental pattern and helps us to offer them support in making the transition required to respond differently to the problems they encounter. Social-emotional development is a paradoxical process of self-discovery because it happens through self-loss. As Luke 9:24 tells us, it is in losing our selves in the journey of faith that we are led deeper and deeper into self-discovery—we gain a self by losing a self

The following brief overview of the social-emotional developmental journey beyond infancy (**Stage 1**) highlights both the strengths and limits of each stage. I also include statistics from research done by adult developmentalist, Suzanne Cook-Greuter, that indicate the percentage of the general adult population that function at Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5.[12] A study of student populations in seminaries confirms a similar trend in the distribution of developmental levels in North American seminaries.[13]

**Stage 2**: In the gradual movement toward Stage 2, the child comes to see self and other as opposites. Stage 2 is referred to as the "Instrumentalist" stage in which the self is subject to her own needs, wishes, and interests and the other is seen as an instrument or resource for her needs-gratification. In this stage, the self relates to the other in terms of the possible consequences for her own worldview. She is unable to consider the other's independent view without beginning with an account of her own view. Although Cook-Greuter's research indicates that about 10 percent of the general adult population is still developmentally at Stage 2, most adult development literature does not include Stage 2.[14] In my experience, understanding this stage is very helpful in assessing learner readiness to even begin theological field education. The persistence of this stage in the adult development of seminary students is evidenced by some of the comments reported in the survey:

- lack of self-awareness (subject to her own needs);
- tendency to regard ministry as a job rather than vocation;

- patterns of relationship that polarize others as well as avoid or heighten conflict; and
- lack of emotional and physical boundaries.

**Stage 3**: In Stage 3, "Other-Dependency," an individual gradually begins to internalize other(s) who become part of her self. In this stage, the self subordinates her needs to the community or work group. Her identity is determined by others who are needed to contribute to her own sense of self. Her beliefs and judgments are influenced by the real or imagined expectations of others. Cook-Greuter's research indicates that approximately 55 percent of the adult population functions at Stage 3. Developmental practitioners report that institutions and culture, in general, offer very little social support to move beyond this stage. In some cases, there is much pressure put upon people to stay here in an effort to maintain the status quo.[15] Tendencies among seminary students attributed to this stage are found in the following examples given by respondents:

- real or imagined inability to take responsibility for one's learning;
- boundary issues in dual relationships;
- struggling to take responsibility for one's own learning and other dependency issues; and
- poor management of change, evidenced by the need to please or fit in.

**Stage 4:** Those who move beyond the other-dependent state to Stage 4, the "Self-Authoring" stage, have gained greater self-insight into their needs. Actions flow from their striving to live out of their own value system. As with Stage 2, Stage 4 is about psychological self-sufficiency. The difference is that in Stage 2, the individual maintains her autonomy through personal control of the external environment, whereas the Stage 4 individual ensures her self-sufficiency through personal control of her psychological self-definition and her value-directed conduct in the world.

Cook-Greuter's research indicates that about 25 percent of the general adult population is at Stage 4, many of whom are in managerial type roles within their organizations or communities. For many people, it is hard work to get there and when they finally do, they often feel that they have finally made it. Stage 4 individuals prefer to maintain the status quo. They have difficulty standing away from their idiosyncratic life and career history in a critical way, because they are subject to it. In fact, they may be defensive when asked to do so. As change-agents, they will try to impose their own value system on others in order to make the community better and may find it challenging to go beyond merely respecting others. This can be evident in developmental needs of seminary students reported in the survey:

- lack of self-awareness (subject to own norms and value system);
- tendencies to be defensive and polarize people; and
- poor change management skills (try to impose own value system on community/others).

**Stage 5:** In the move toward Stage 5, the self gradually gives up identifying with any particular role or value system, especially when it is seen as an obstacle of getting to know his own limits. This is the highest stage in the current adult development literature. Cook-Greuter's research indicates that less than 10 percent of the adult population achieves this stage completely. Giving priority to self-regulation for the sake of others, the Stage 5 self slowly surrenders her counter-dependent independence for interdependence. Others contribute to her integrity and balance. As the need to control lessens, an awareness of limitations leads to greater humility. At this "Self-Aware" stage, rather than being subject to one's own self-determined ideological or value system, there is a refinement and redefinition of one's views in conversation with others' who may hold different value systems. This shift is also reflected in the advancement from being a manager in an organization to being a system-wide leader, gradually becoming more adept at taking, coordinating, and evaluating multiple perspectives with others. In moving from being an "institution with its own values and laws," the individual is no longer subject to being a "self-made" institution as such. This capacity has an impact on how obligations towards self and others are determined in response to the question, "What should I do and for whom?"

Cognitive Profile: "What Can I Do and What are My Options?"

As with aspects of social-emotional development, the cognitive dimension clarifies some of the developmental challenges named above. Distinguishing between "how" we know and "what" we know, the CDF reveals the structure of our thinking that significantly affects our range of options and actions. In this framework, thinking has three essential and interrelated ingredients;

1. the ability for reflective judgment that develops in stages (epistemic positions);
2. the ability to justify what we take to be "true" in logical terms; and
3. a set of cognitive tools that enables us to engage with uncertainty.

All three ingredients are acquired gradually throughout the course of life as we move through four eras of cognitive development, each of which has

its own inquiry system. They are all ingredients of an adult developmental achievement.[16] As with the stages in the social-emotional strand, each era of cognitive development integrates the previous era into a more complex and inclusive thinking system—and each era has its strengths and its limits.

The first era, referred to as the Era of Common Sense, is usually attributed to young children whose thinking is usually very concrete and does not recognize contradictions. At about the age of 10, humans begin to think logically, moving them into the Era of Understanding. Common sense is incorporated into a more abstract level of thinking in which contradictions are recognized, but not tolerated. This kind of "either/or" thinking is demonstrated by what respondents in the survey referred to as dogmatism and literalism. From early adulthood on, cognitive development leads from mastering formal logic to practicing post-formal or dialectical thinking, in which contradictions become included as part of the bigger picture of reality. Here we move into the Era of Reason in which we become fluid in using abstractions in more sophisticated ways than were possible in the Era of Understanding. The culmination of the process is the Era of Practical Wisdom.

Together the four eras, or classes, of thought-forms offer a dialectical view of knowledge and existence as an open system in which change, wholeness, and internal relations are integral to the unceasing process of transformation. In each of these eras, adults choose and act from different inquiry systems, levels of systemic thinking, and degrees of thought fluidity; thereby performing differently in their respective organizational environments. Each of these eras can be characterized by a particular set of cognitive tools that progressively become available to consciousness as they predictably transform the previous cognitive dimension.[17]

The benefit of this framework for formation and supervision in ministry is that by operationalizing dialectical thinking, we can enhance it in learners by teaching and using dialectical thought-forms in theological reflection. Each of the four eras is differentiated by the degree to which cognitive fluidity can be measured by listening for the speaker's use of dialectical thought-forms. As cognitive fluidity increases, an individual will use an increasing number of thought forms with progressively stronger interconnections among them. As the summit of cognitive development, Practical Wisdom is characterized by what seems to be a return to the simplicity of Common Sense. In this era, even complex insight becomes entirely natural and is produced without the effort that dialectical thinking requires. This is

the degree of wisdom toward which humans strive and yet very few fully realize.[18]

There is one additional structure to the CDF system that needs to be mentioned. The **epistemic position** is the stance which mediates between the social-emotional stage and our phase of cognitive development. As one of the three ingredients in cognitive development, epistemic position reflects our social-emotional stage in the cognitive domain, underlying our social-emotional attachment to where and how truth is to be found. This insight has helped me to understand why some learners demonstrate strong emotional attachments to their respective views of knowledge and truth— the epistemic position defines a person's conception of these. As with other dimensions of this framework, the epistemic position is rooted in stage approach and connects our capacity for reflective thinking (see Appendix III). The epistemic position relates to both our cognitive and social-emotional development and offers a conceptual framework for attending to some of the challenges we encounter in our attempts to do authentic theological reflection with our learners.

## Cognitive Development and Theological Reflection

The survey respondents indicated a strong correlation between development and theological reflection. The greater the learners' self-awareness and capacity for integrative learning, the greater their capacity for theological reflection. In their book entitled *The Art of Theological Reflection*, Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer qualify authentic theological reflection as being "more than mindless obedience to authority or totally self-determined thought and action."[19] As shown in the diagram and explanation below, "mindless obedience to authority" coincides with Killen and de Beer's standpoint of certitude. "Totally self-determined thought and action" coincides with their standpoint of self-assurance. Authentic theological reflection coincides with the standpoint of explorer. Because epistemic position mediates between the social-emotional and cognitive levels of development, it provides a clear developmental perspective to each of the three standpoints.[20]
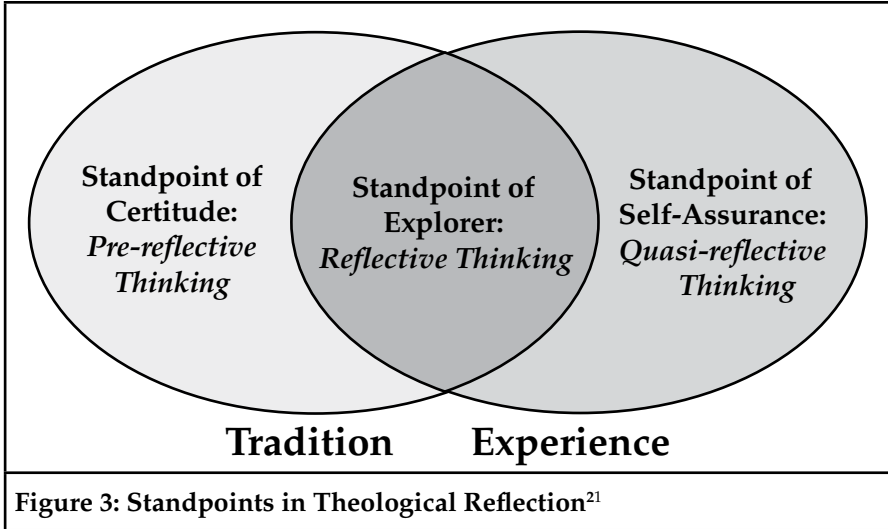
Standpoint of
Certitude:
*Pre-reflective
Thinking*

Standpoint of
Explorer:
*Reflective Thinking*

Standpoint of
Self-Assurance:
*Quasi-reflective
Thinking*

**Tradition      Experience**

**Figure 3: Standpoints in Theological Reflection**[21]

*Standpoint of Certitude as Pre-Reflective Thinking*: This standpoint relies on a given set of knowledge and "rules to direct our lives clearly and effectively." This standpoint mediates the social-emotional need for viewing others as a resource for meeting her own needs with the cognitive era of understanding, in which logic does not tolerate contradictions. This kind of thinking is effective in dealing with well-structured problems that can be described with "a high degree of completeness and can be solved with a high degree of certainty"[22] For example, preparing a worship service can be an example of a well-structured problem. There is knowledge about how worship has been ordered in the past that could be used in the stages of pre-reflective thinking. However, when this same learner encounters conflict among members in the worship committee concerning who should serve as lectors, she may find herself on unfamiliar ground and be ill-equipped to address that conflict. This is an example of an ill-structured problem that "cannot be described with a high degree of completeness and cannot be resolved with a high degree of certainty."[23] Pre-reflective thinkers can tolerate only what fits into their predetermined categories. The learner relies on her deductive thinking skills and has little or no ability to take into account the context or practice into her attempts to solve the problem.

*Standpoint of Self-Assurance as Quasi-ReflectiveThinking:* In this standpoint, the learner seeks certitude through self-reliance and tradition only that which serves to support what he already knows and thinks.[24] This standpoint mediates the social-emotional stages in which he seeks greater

autonomy and independence and his cognitive era of reason, in which formal logic is only beginning to tolerate contradiction. As an inductive thinker, he feels confident that what he knows from within his own context can be justified by his own frames of reference. This confidence is subject to the limits of his embeddedness within family, culture, and traditions, which he either denies or of which he is unaware. Furthermore, because the learner is unaware of his own mental templates, he is unable to reflect on them in order to integrate what he already knows into his ongoing learning.

*Standpoint of Explorer as a Reflective Thinker:* In this standpoint, the learner engages the tradition in conversation with her experience in order to let its wisdom emerge in her life and ministry. This standpoint mediates between the social-emotional stages in which she gradually seeks to re-define her own ideological system in conversation with others who hold different systems, and the era of cognitive development, in which her cognitive fluidity allows for a dialectical view of reality. Her epistemic stance of exploration is "faithful to the fullest reading of the tradition, including the experience of the present community of faith."[25] Knowledge is viewed as the outcome of a reasonable inquiry and decisions are justified on the basis of a variety of interpretative considerations, including the weight of evidence and the explanatory value of interpretations.[26] It is only in this standpoint that learners can overcome what one respondent has named as "the developmental challenge of seeing and understanding how the Christian worldview reframes and interacts" with his own economic, political, and sociological environment.

Whether we think logically or dialectically, we take a position toward what is the nature of truth for us. The higher our cognitive fluidity, the more cognitive tools we have at our disposal to find and create knowledge. Learners who demonstrate tendencies towards dogmatism and literalism and have difficulty analyzing a contextual problem are most likely in a pre-reflective stage. On the other hand, those who appear confused, lack theological clarity, and have difficulty dealing with ambiguity might find themselves in a quasi-reflective stage, in which justification for truth and knowledge is idiosyncratic and context-specific. CDF is helpful for understanding the recurring challenge of accepting multiple sides of an issue. It gives us a framework for seeing when learners lack the cognitive tools to construct solutions that can be evaluated by criteria, such as the weight of evidence indicated by the practicality of the solutions they choose. It is only in the epistemic positions attributed to "reflective thinking" that knowledge comes to be viewed

as the outcome of a process of reasonable inquiry in which solutions to ill-structured problems can be constructed.[27]

*Implications for Pastoral Supervision*

The CDF approach to adult education signals that "stages of development unfold in a specific invariant sequence, with each successive stage including and transcending the previous one."[28] If theological field education is, as one respondent claims, "the crucible" for integration and if authentic theological reflection is to be undertaken as Killen and de Beer claim, from the standpoint of the explorer, then educators must not only posit the goal before the learners—we must have a sense of where they currently are developmentally in order provide them with the necessary learning opportunities, and then accompany them through the developmental trajectory toward that goal. This is where CDF can support our educational practices.

At the core of the CDF are its claims that cognitive development is the motor for social-emotional development and that dialectical thinking can be taught.

> [I]n contrast to social-emotional development, cognitive development is to a high degree open to influence by teaching and coaching. A person can be helped in reaching a higher level of cognitive equilibrium by using dialectical thought forms as *mind openers*. No such tools exist in the social-emotional domain, which is a different way of saying that all tools used in that domain are cognitive by definition.[29]

Because the cognitive tools can be taught, I believe they can also serve in mentoring or pastoral supervision for giving feedback and opening other avenues for reflecting on pastoral and ecclesial *praxis*.

Theological field education is often marked by ideological debates that reinforce the division between relativism and absolutism. This is one of the areas that I believe the CDF use of dialectical thinking makes an important contribution to pastoral leadership education. According to Michael Basseches, one of the primary sources for the CDF cognitive framework—dialectical thinking—remediates and transforms these two exclusive forms of thinking that continue to draw the line between many of our ideologies and theologies.

> "Dialectical thinking as an intellectual tradition represents a third alternative to two powerful styles of thought which have exerted considerable influence on contemporary humanistic, scientific and social thought in both their professional and "common sense" forms." I call these "universalistic formalistic thinking and relativistic thinking."[30]

Both universalist and relativistic thinking are closed-system thinking; that is they both see reality as closed, static systems—one gives priority to uniformity and the other to diversity. This is evident in the Standpoints of Certitude and Self-Assurance.

Dialectical thinking is the third alternative to both these ways of thinking in that it views the evolution of orderly thought as an ongoing process. In the Standpoint of the Explorer, the dialectical thinker, "the *process of finding and creating order* in the universe is viewed as fundamental to human life and inquiry."[31] If the statistics are right, less than 35 percent of the general population has attained this level of development. The constructive-developmental approach to adult education signals that "stages of development unfold in a specific invariant sequence, with each successive stage transcending and including the previous one."[32] This calls for attending to where the learners are developmentally in order to support them in their own developmental trajectory. If a learner is in the Standpoint of Certitude, the support he will need to move into the Standpoint of Self-Assurance will be very different from that of a learner who is currently in Self-Assurance. Otherwise, educators risk simply inducting or socializing learners into a new conformity with its own set of values, loyalties, and language. Kegan describes this risk as a challenge to our "teacherly capacities for generativity: Are we willing to support people's moves to places we ourselves have already been? Are we able to be good company on the road to fresh discoveries that are no longer fresh for us?"[33]

If theological reflection is, as one respondent claims, the "crucible" for integration and if authentic theological reflection is to be undertaken as Killen and de Beer claim from the standpoint of the explorer, then as educators, not only must we posit the goal before the learners, we must have a sense of where they currently are developmentally in order provide them with developmental learning opportunities to accompany them in the sequence of stages toward that goal. This is where the CDF can support our educational practices.

## Conclusion

I have reported the findings of a survey exploring developmental issues in theological field education and have presented aspects of the CDF as a way of making more explicit links between formation for ministry and adult development theory. I have shown how CDF can re-frame some (but not all) of the developmental issues noted in the survey. It is my hope that this article

will offer readers a new perspective for thinking about the way we attend to developmental learning in formation for ministry. It is also my hope that this article might open the way to advancing this preliminary study in order to make this framework more accessible to other educators in a variety of processes of formation for ministry.

**NOTES**

1.    There is a growing field of studies on this connection, see M. Cecil Smith and Thomas Pourchot, eds., *Adult Learning and Development: Perspectives from Educational Psychology* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998); Carol Hoare, ed., *Handbook of Adult Development and Learning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

2.    Carol Hoare, "Growing a Discipline at the Borders of Thought" in Hoare, *Handbook of Adult Development and Learning*, 3.

3.    Lorraine Ste-Marie, *Beyond Words: A New Language for a Changing Church* (Ottawa, Canada: Novalis, 2008).

4.    Otto Laske, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions: The Art and Science of Fully Engaging Adults*, vol. 1 (Medford, MA: Interdevelopmental Institute, 2005) and *Measuring Hidden Dimensions: The Art and Science of Fully Engaging Adults*, vol. 2 (Medford, MA: Interdevelopmental Institute, 2008).

5.    Cynthia. D. McCauley, Wilfred H. Drath, Charles J. Palus, Patricia M. G. O'Connor, and Becca A. Baker, "The Use of Constructive-Developmental Theory to Advance the Understanding of Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 17 (2006): 634–653.

6.    Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

7.    One of the reasons for the low response rate was the difficulty that some potential participants encountered in accessing the online survey software.

8.    Responses compiled for a workshop offered at the ATFE 31st Biennial Consultation, see The Association for Theological Education at www.atfe.org.

9.    Garrett McAuliffe, "The Evolution of Professional Competence: in Adult Development and Learning" in Hoare, *Handbook of Adult Development and Learning*, 477.

10.   See Wikipedia entry on Anaïs Nin: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ana%C3%AFs_Nin. Italics added by author of this article.

11.   Robert Kegan, *In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,1994).

12.   Suzanne Cook-Greuter, *Postautonomous Ego Development: A Study of Its Nature and Measurement*. Doctoral Thesis, Harvard Graduate School of Education (Ann Arbor, MI: Bell & Howell, 1999), 35, cited in Laske, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions*, vol. 1, 30. I have included the statistics for all 4 stages described in this article.

13. Martin Rovers, *Who's in the Seminary: Roman Catholic Seminarians Today* (Ottawa, Ontario: Novalis, 1996). Although this study does not use the constructive-development framework, a close look at the criteria for personal autonomy reveals enough similarities to justify this comparison. See Chapter 2, "The Theory of Personal Authority, or Maturity," 17–22.

14. McCauley, et al, *The Leadership Quarterly* 17 (2006): 636–637.

15. Laske, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions,* vol. 1, 108.

16. Otto Laske, *Helping Clients Think Systemically: Tools for Cognitive Process Consultation, Interdevelopmental Institute*, 2007, slide 11.

17. Laske, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions*, vol. 2, 121.

18. Ibid., 129.

19. Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroads, 1996), 15.

20. Ibid., 1–19.

21. Adapted from Killen and de Beer, *Art of Theological Reflection*, 17.

22. Patricia M. King and Karen Strohm Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and Promoting Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking in Adolescents and Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 11.

23. Ibid., 11.

24. Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 13.

25. Ibid., 15.

26. King and Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment*, 16. This stance also holds for the "Asserting" stage in James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 76–85.

27. Lorraine Ste-Marie and Abigail Johnson, "The Impact of Constructivist Developmental Framework on Adult Learning in Ministry Leadership Formation," *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftspsychologie* 12, no. 1 (2010): 76–83.

28. McCauley, et al, *The Leadership Quarterly* 17 (2006): 636.

29. Laske, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions*, vol. 2, 221: italics in original.

30. Michael Basseches, *Dialectical Thinking and Adult Development* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1984), 9.

31. Ibid., 11: italics in original.

32. McCauley, et al, *The Leadership Quarterly* 17 (2006): 636.

33. Kegan, *In Over our Heads*, 292–293.

# Appendix I

## Online Questionnaire to Theological Field Educators

1. **Name of institution:**

2. **Denomination of institution:**

3. **Denomination(s) served by institution:**

4. **Average size of annual cohort beginning seminary formation:**
   - 1 to 20
   - 20 to 50
   - 50 to 100
   - Over 100

5. **Geographic location of institution:**
   - USA
   - Canada
   - New Zealand
   - Australia
   - United Kingdom
   - Other:

6. **Geographic location served by institution:**
   - USA
   - Canada
   - New Zealand
   - Australia
   - United Kingdom
   - Other (please specify):

7. **In your experience, what has been the most pressing developmental need for candidates in ministry?**
   - Social
   - Emotional
   - Psychological
   - Cognitive
   - Spiritual
   - Ethical/Moral
   - Other:

**8.   Please give examples of how these needs manifested?**

**9.   What other language or term do you use to refer to students' development in your program?**
- Adult development
- Maturity
- Integrity
- Progress
- Other (please specify):

**10.  Are there particular developmental needs that you would associate more with specific age groups?**
- 25 to 35 years of age (please comment)
- 35 to 45 years of age (please comment)
- 45 and older (please comment)
- Not applicable

**11.  What protocol or procedures do you currently have in place to assess a person's readiness to begin theological field education?**
- In-house assessment instruments/questionnaires (please specify types)
- Standardized assessments (please specify types)
- Profiles of Ministry
- Personal Interviews
- Other (please specify):

**12.  Who is responsible for that initial assessment?**
- Program Director
- Field Education Director
- Psychologist
- Other (please specify):

**13.  Are the findings of the initial assessment shared with the theological field educator? If so, how?**

**14.  Is there a procedure in place to follow student' progress on their developmental needs based on the initial or subsequent assessments? If so, please comment.**

15. **How does your ministry program take into account the levels of development of specific students in its program design and delivery (ex. assign in-house mentors, individual growth assignments)? Where is the place of theological field education in that process?**

16. **Who decides which learning strategies to implement in order to address students' developmental needs?**
   - Program Director
   - Faculty Committee
   - Field Education Director
   - Other (please comment)

17. **How are those strategies evaluated? Please comment.**

18. **In your experience, what is the connection between a student's development and his or her capacity for theological reflection?**

19. **Do the Adjudicating Committees in the denominations you serve address the issue of adult development in their pastoral leadership outcomes?**
   - No
   - Yes ( please specify in which way)
   - Not applicable

20. **What measures are in place for assessing student's development at the completion of their program?**
   - Final assignments
   - Faculty reports
   - Exit interviews
   - Other (please specify):

21. **Any other comments concerning student development issues.**

# Appendix III

## King and Kitchener's Seven Stages of Reflective Judgment*

### Epistemic Position:
### "Where do I stand with respect to knowledge and truth?"

### *Pre-reflective Thinking: Stages 1, 2, and 3*

### Stage 1

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is assumed to exist absolutely and concretely.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs need no justification since there is assumed to be an absolute correspondence between what is believed to be true and what is true.

### Stage 2

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or certain but not immediately available.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs are unexamined and unjustified by their correspondence with the beliefs of an authority figure (such as a teacher or parent).

### Stage 3

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or temporarily uncertain.

*Concept of Justification:* In areas in which certain answers exist, beliefs are justified by reference to authorities' views.

### *Quasi-reflective Thinking: Stages 4 and 5*

### Stage 4

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is uncertain and knowledge claims are idiosyncratic to the individual since situational variables.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs are justified by giving reasons and using evidence, but the arguments and choice of evidence are idiosyncratic.

### Stage 5

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is contextual and subjective since it is filtered through a person's perceptions and criteria for judgment.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs are justified within a particular context by means of the rules of inquiry for that context and by context-specific interpretations of evidence.

## Reflective Thinking: Stages 6 and 7

### Stage 6

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is constructed into individual conclusions about ill-structured problems on the basis of information from a variety of sources.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs are justified by comparing evidence and opinion from different perspectives on an issue or across different contexts and by constructing solutions that are evaluated by criteria such as the weight of the evidence, the utility of the solution, or the pragmatic need for action.

### Stage 7

*View of Knowledge:* Knowledge is the outcome of a process of reasonable inquiry in which solutions to ill-structured problems are constructed.

*Concept of Justification:* Beliefs are justified probabilistically on the basis of a variety of interpretive considerations, such as the weight of the evidence, the explanatory value of the interpretations, the risk of erroneous conclusions, consequences of alternative judgments, and the interrelationships of these factors.

* Adapted and synthesized from Patricia M. King and Karen Strohm Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and Promoting Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking in Adolescents and Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 44–74.