

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review will provide an overview of the various career development needs of undecided students and common career interventions. It will explore the influence of parental involvement as well as best practices in connecting with parents of college students. Baxter Magolda's and King's theory of self-authorship and Marcia's theory of identity development and their application to career development will be discussed. Following this theoretical framework, the diverse characteristics and needs of undecided students will be explored along with the effectiveness of common career development interventions. Parental involvement in the lives of today's college students will be investigated along with its effects on career decision-making. Lastly, common approaches for partnering with parents will be outlined with a focus on best practices for meeting parental needs during orientation.

Theory/Rationale

Self-Authorship

In their theory of self-authorship, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) recognize college as a time of transformation where reliance on authority gradually shifts to construction of one's own knowledge and values. Robert Kegan described self-authorship as "internally coordinating beliefs, values, and interpersonal loyalties rather than depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties" (as cited in Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xviii). Acknowledging connections

between cognitive complexity, identity, and mature relationships, this holistic theory addresses three dimensions of development. The epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions intertwine to form self-authorship.

Cognitive processing is addressed in the epistemological dimension and refers to how knowledge is viewed and evaluated. Cognitive maturity requires viewing knowledge as contextual and recognizing that multiple perspectives exist. It requires the capacity to participate in constructing and evaluating knowledge, as well as in interpreting judgments based on available evidence. Contextual knowers construct knowledge internally and critically analyze external perspectives rather than adopting them without questioning. Developing maturity in the epistemological dimension creates outcomes such as mature decision-making and problem-solving (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

The intrapersonal dimension describes construction of identity and view of oneself. Construction of an identity requires “the ability to reflect on, explore, and choose enduring values” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p.9). Individuals must coordinate various characteristics to form an identity that “gains stability over time, yet is open to growth” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p.9). In order to do so, this identity must be internally constructed rather than adopted to seek others’ approval.

The interpersonal dimension of development details how one views him or herself in relation to others and how relationships are constructed. Mature relationships include respect for both one’s own and others’ identities and culture, and the ability to collaborate to address multiple perspectives and needs. The

capacity for interdependence is the foundation of this dimension, meaning there is “an openness to other perspectives without being consumed by them” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 10).

Maturity in each of these dimensions is dependent on the others. Together, they form self-authorship. For example, in order to construct an internal belief system, reflecting cognitive maturity, and form an integrated identity, one must avoid being consumed by others’ perspectives. Similarly, developing mature interdependent relationships requires an established identity, consideration of multiple perspectives, and an internal belief system (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

College students are expected to make informed choices regarding their major and future careers while in college. Though K-12 schools provide career advising and some opportunity for exploration, as students enter college they are many times in need of further self-knowledge, occupational information, and decision-making skills (Gysbers, 2013; Cuseo, 2005). To make a career decision, they must analyze multiple career options and their own interests to ideally pursue a direction that merges the two. This process requires self-authorship. Yet, Baxter Magolda (2003) argues that what educators expect of students and what is provided as the educational context are contradictory. Higher education institutions often promote externally focused career decision-making by asking students to commit to majors before they have had meaningful opportunities to explore their interests and abilities. “Educators and parents reward students who choose majors believed to lead to success even if these choices do not reflect an internal compass” (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p. 234).

Students who are self-authored interpret experiences as they are encountered, deciding what to keep as part of their own identity and meaning-making. They would be less likely to choose a major because they think someone else wants them to and more likely to choose majors and careers consistent with their own values. According to Baxter Magolda (2003), this would reduce the frequency of changing majors and perhaps yield more effective in-depth learning in areas to which students are committed. Better career decisions would in turn enhance students' educational experience and preparation for careers after college.

Self-Authorship and decision-making. The degree to which a student is self-authored may impact his or her career decision-making, as it influences the way in which individuals make meaning of the advice they receive. Individuals early in their journey toward self-authorship make meaning based on external formulas, seeking answers from authority figures or following advice from those perceived to know the correct answer. As progress is made, they begin to recognize the importance of making their own decisions, but are not yet able to do so. Upon achieving self-authorship, individuals consider information and advice from a variety of sources, and integrate it with internal beliefs and values, before ultimately making their own decision (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007).

In a five-year study of female college students in the field of information technology, Laughlin and Creamer (2007) gathered information about their career decision-making processes. Most participants indicated they had discussed careers with a wide range of people such as family, friends, parents, advisors and teachers.

However, very few identified teachers, advisors, or professional role models as having significantly influenced their decision, highlighting a distinction between whom they talked with and whose advice was seriously considered. When asked why they considered certain opinions important, the nature of the relationship with that person outweighed any judgment about the individual's knowledge or expertise (Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). In addition, Laughlin and Creamer concluded that college women are often not developmentally ready to process information, such as career advice, when it conflicts with recommendations made by those they trust. Some students may reject sound advice, "not because they have genuinely considered it, but because they have not developed the cognitive complexity to negotiate diverse viewpoints" (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005, p. 25). Though participants expressed confidence in their ability to make their own decisions, this did not necessarily reflect the ability to decide on their own after considering multiple perspectives.

Laughlin and Creamer suggest experiential learning as an opportunity to expose students to problem-solving and consideration of multiple perspectives. These experiences can promote further growth through journaling assignments that encourage reflection and discussions that require students to juggle competing knowledge claims to make complex decisions. They suggest advisors can help students to consider the limits of relying exclusively on people with whom they have close relationships. For example, students could be asked to list career fields in which they or their family have first-hand knowledge, then note areas where they feel they have access to reliable information. This invites students to bring their own ideas

into the decision-making process and to make judgments about knowledge by considering the limits of others' perspectives (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Marcia's Theory of Identity Development

Psychologist James Marcia's theory of identity development offers another framework through which career exploration can be viewed. Focusing on identity development, his theory adds depth to Baxter Magolda and King's intrapersonal dimension in their theory of self-authorship. Basing his research on Erik Erikson's life span development theory, Marcia created a structure to allow for empirical study of identity development. He identified four statuses which classify the identity development characteristics of young adults. These statuses are *foreclosure*, *identity diffusion*, *moratorium* and *identity achievement*. They are not necessarily progressive or permanent, but offer an understanding for how individuals balance exploration and commitment regarding ideological and occupational decision-making (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

Each status is defined in terms of the presence or absence of a period of exploration and decision-making, often referred to as a *crisis*, and the extent of personal investment, or *commitment*, to the decision (Marcia, 1980). Exploration, or crisis, involves questioning values and goals defined by parents and weighing various alternatives. Individuals experiencing crisis seek resources such as teachers or friends to help them explore options. They read, take classes, or participate in new experiences in order to generate enough knowledge to make an informed decision (Waterman & Archer, as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Marcia (1989) describes

exploration as “serious consideration of alternative occupational, ideological, and interpersonal directions” (p. 405) and advocates for making these experiences personally meaningful. Commitment refers to the ability and willingness to eliminate some of the alternatives while attaching ownership to other choices, values and goals (Marcia, 1989). Individuals who have solidified a commitment have made a decision with which they are confident and optimistic. They confirm their goals, and take action toward achieving them (Evans et al., 2010).

Foreclosure is the most common identity status and usually occurs prior to other statuses (Marcia, 1994, as cited in Evans et al., 2010). Individuals in this status accept and commit to parental values and goals without questioning (Evans et al., 2010). In terms of occupational identity development, students in foreclosure have made a commitment to a major or career but without the exploration process (Berrios-Allison, 2005). Marcia (1989) describes that for foreclosures, the consideration of alternatives is paired with fear of rejection by those who are closest to the individual, creating an internal barrier to exploration.

Unlike foreclosures, individuals in the states of diffusion and moratorium have not yet made a commitment. Occupational identity diffusion indicates that students have not engaged in the exploration process or made any commitments to a career choice. They either refuse to or are unable to commit, and exhibit a general lack of concern regarding making a commitment. Moratorium, however, is the most engaging status. Individuals in this status are actively questioning parental values in

order to form their own identity. They are exploring career choices but have not yet committed to a major or career (Marcia, as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Following moratorium, individuals typically move into identity achievement. Identity achievement comes after a period of crisis, exploration and decision-making, in which individuals sort through alternatives and make choices that lead to strong commitments. Occupational identity achievement indicates that students have explored different occupational options and as a result have committed to an occupational choice. Individuals in this status are pursuing self-chosen goals. They rely on an internal rather than external process to construct their identity, creating their own path, rather than allowing others to shape who they are (Marcia, as cited in Evans et al., 2010).

Research/Evaluation

Undecided Students

Gordon (2007) describes undecided students as those who are “unable, unready, or unwilling to commit themselves to a specific academic direction” (p.81). Many institutions are actively engaged in helping these students to develop career goals and some have begun to develop new terms to identify this large population of students. In order to reduce stigma and promote the positives of waiting to declare a major, some now refer to this group as “exploring”, “pre-major” or “deciding”. However, the terms “undecided” and “undeclared” are still most common (Gordon, 2007, p. 197).

Throughout years of study, research has only confirmed that undecided students comprise a complex and heterogeneous group with varied reasons for and levels of indecision (Gordon, 2007). The largest group of undecided students are traditional-aged first-year students, with another significant group being those who enter college as “decided” but later change their minds. In addition, for high-ability students with multi-potentiality, the number of choices can be overwhelming, causing difficulty in settling on a major. Underprepared and underachieving students also represent a unique challenge, as they may lack the skills to perform certain levels of academic work, or place limitations on the careers they can realistically explore (Gordon, 2007).

In their 25-year longitudinal study, Gordon and Steele (2003) studied undecided first-year students in an attempt to create a profile that could be used to target the needs of this population. Students’ career interest areas suggested extreme diversity, with all career areas selected by a significant number of students. The type of assistance students felt would be helpful varied widely with talking to a counselor, participating in a career-related experience, taking a career planning course, and information sessions with faculty members chosen most often.

As the years progressed, reported levels of anxiety increased, as did the number of women who chose not to declare a major. Researchers also noticed that very few minority students were undecided even though they worked with many “decided” minority students who had doubts about their choice. Though all students in this study were “undecided”, their degree of indecision varied widely. On average

22% indicated they were “completely undecided”, 31% were “tentatively decided” and an average of 43% said they had “several ideas but were not ready to decide” (Gordon & Steele, 2003, p. 23).

Discovery of these varying degrees of indecision has caused a shift in recognizing indecision as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Gordon, 1998). The focus of research has gone from exploring undecided student characteristics to defining subtypes of undecided and decided students (Steele, 2003). Upon reviewing fifteen studies on types of undecided and decided students, Gordon (1998) classified students into six general categories along a continuum of decidedness to undecidedness: very decided, somewhat decided, unstable decided, tentatively undecided, developmentally undecided, and seriously undecided. Her undecided types represent decreasing levels of self-esteem and vocational identity. Tentatively undecided students have self-confidence and do not perceive barriers to their goals, while developmentally undecided students need to gather personal and career information or develop decision-making skills. Seriously undecided students commonly have low self-esteem and an undeveloped vocational identity. Their perception of external barriers and dependence on others may prevent them from taking responsibility for making a decision (Gordon, 1998).

Identifying subtypes helps professionals consider how each student's needs vary and recognize that the difference between decided and undecided students has less to do with the certainty of their choice than with students' “developmental,

psychological, and sociological makeup combined with their decision-making skills and access to information” (Steele, 2003, p.15).

Though there is little evidence of a set of common characteristics of undecided students, there are a number of studies where differences between decided and undecided students are suggested. Several studies found that undecided students reported lower levels of career decision-making self-efficacy than decided students (Morgan & Ness, 2003; Bullock-Yowell, McConnell, & Schedin, 2014). Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s own capability to perform a given behavior. As it relates to career decision-making, self-efficacy influences a student’s ability and confidence in identifying and choosing appropriate career paths (Bandura, 1977). People with a strong sense of career decision-making self-efficacy are more likely to investigate career alternatives and believe that they are capable of making a career decision (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014).

Undecided students also report more negative career thoughts and more career decision-making difficulties than their decided peers. They are as ready to make career decisions as decided peers, but their decision-making difficulty may be due to lacking or inconsistent career information (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014). In addition, identity development is an important factor in career decision-making. Consistent with Marcia’s identity development theory, those who are further along in the process of identity development experience fewer difficulties with making a career decision (Morgan & Ness, 2003).

A study by Gordon and Kline (1989) examined the perceived advising needs of both decided and undecided college freshman in each of Marcia's identity statuses. Results revealed significant differences in identity development between decided and undecided students, with undecided students showing higher moratorium scores and decided students more likely to be identity achieved. Undecided students were also more likely to be diffused, while decided students were more often foreclosed (Gordon & Kline, 1989).

Entering freshman display varying levels of exploration and commitment, with advising needs changing based on their identity status. Students who seemed to be moving out of diffusion and into moratorium expressed a need for both information and personal support. Those in moratorium reported the greatest need for personal support, demonstrating that the higher the state of uncertainty, the more students desire support. Providing a comfortable and caring atmosphere will support students in moratorium, as will helping them to explore in a logical fashion, assisting with gathering and reflecting on information (Gordon & Kline, 1989).

It is often assumed that students who declare a major need little career assistance, however, Orndorff and Herr (1996) found that decided students are also in need of occupational exploration. Decided students were more aware of their values, interests, and abilities than undecided students, but had not engaged in more occupational exploration than undecided students. Gordon and Kline (1989) also found that many decided students, even in the identity achieved status, reported a need for information and personal support. They may view their choice as tentative

and feel a need to examine or confirm. In addition, career counselors must be cautious in interpreting assessments of career commitment. In Gordon and Kline's (1989) study, there was not a significant number of students who reported to be in foreclosure. Researchers concluded that the items on their questionnaire were likely not adequately sensitive to this population. Because Marcia's identity achievers and foreclosures are both committed to occupational goals, career indecision assessments do not account for important differences between students who are committed to self-chosen vocational goals and those who are committed to goals chosen for them by significant others. It should not be assumed that those who score highly have made an informed and autonomous choice (Brisbin & Savickas, 1994).

Interventions for Undecided Students

Undecided students have academic and career exploration needs that require specially designed interventions to help them make appropriate decisions. Career interventions are activities designed to improve an individual's ability to make wise career decisions. They include tasks that "help individuals explore careers, enhance career awareness, learn decision-making skills, acquire job search skills, and learn about work cultures" (Esters & Retallick, 2013, p. 72). Career interventions in general have been shown to be effective (Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998; Brown et al., 2003). They contribute to increased career decidedness, vocational identity, career maturity, and career decision-making self-efficacy (Esters & Retallick, 2013).

Vocational identity and career maturity are both developmental processes. Vocational identity refers to gaining an increasingly clearer sense of one's own

career-related interests, talents and goals, while career maturity reflects the level of capacity to make a career decision. It involves attitudes toward the decision-making process as well as decision-making skills (Esters & Retallick, 2013). Due to its influence on successful educational and career outcomes, career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) has received extensive attention from researchers (Esters & Retallick, 2013; Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Reese & Miller, 2006; Komarraju, Swanson, & Nadler, 2014). It encompasses five components: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem-solving, and can be fostered by experiencing successful performance, receiving encouragement, observing role models, and learning to manage emotions (Bandura, 1977). CDMSE is derived from Bandura's self-efficacy theory and refers to a person's belief in his or her own capability to make successful career decisions (Bandura, 1977). High career self-efficacy is reflected in self-confidence in completing career-related tasks. This anticipation of positive outcomes typically influences further career exploration and is positively related to career decidedness (Maples & Luzzo, 2005; Komarraju, et al., 2014).

Since undecided students comprise a heterogeneous group with diverse needs, there is no one intervention that works best for every student. Therefore, to create effective services for undecided students, Gordon indicates "the identification and implementation of a wide range of services and the coordination and collaboration of many campus offices are essential" (Gordon, 2007, p.138).

Career advising. Career advising is a process which helps students understand how their personal interests, abilities and values relate to the career fields they are considering, and supports them in forming academic and career goals accordingly. It is different from psychological career counseling which assists students with complex career-related personal concerns (McCalla-Wriggins, 2009). In their examination of career intervention studies published between 1983 and 1995, Whiston et al. (1998) found support for the importance of advisor or counselor involvement in providing career interventions. An individual approach was most effective, providing the greatest gain per session, while counselor-free interventions tended to be less effective than other formats. For example, individual test interpretation and group career advising were found to be significantly more effective than interventions that did not involve a counselor (Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003).

Nelson's (1982) study provides support for the practice of career advising. He conducted a study involving college athletes enrolled in their first-semester at James Madison University. At the end of the semester, a group who had attended five weekly career development sessions with an academic advisor, showed higher GPAs than those who did not participate in career advising. Those who were originally decided on their major, as well as those who were undecided, showed more changes in their majors and expressed significantly more satisfaction with their majors.

Little has been written or studied about the specific effects of various counseling or advising approaches with undecided students (Sams, Brown, Hussey, &

Leonard, 2003). Yet, Van Wie (2011) suggests many successful advising programs favor a developmental approach. Developmental advising focuses on more than simply the student's personal or vocational decision. This approach seeks to facilitate the student's self-awareness, problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). Developmental advisors assist students in becoming more independent by helping them to set realistic goals and make informed decisions (Jordan, 2000).

Pizzolato (2006) studied one approach to developmental advising through investigating advising practices that promote decision-making from a self-authored perspective. Her study found that students who displayed self-authorship had commonly interacted with advisors who implemented certain strategies. These advisors placed a priority on goal reflection prior to making major or career decisions, encouraging students to choose a path that would help to achieve their goals. They focused on more than immediate needs, assisting students in anticipating future challenges and obstacles. In addition, advisors facilitating self-authorship implemented strategies reflecting Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) Learning Partnerships Model. This model supports the shift from authority dependence to self-authorship through the core principles of: validating learners' capacity to know, situating learning in the learner's experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed meaning. Advisors promoted these principles through helping students to articulate strengths and weaknesses, encouraging them to participate in real world experiences, and guiding them through identification of positive and negative aspects

of each choice. They challenged students to explain their decision-making process and engaged in conversations about the variety of options available, as well as potential impacts of each option (Pizzolato, 2006).

Career courses. Courses that provide career development are an increasingly popular approach to supporting undecided students on college campuses. A survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that more than half of the institutions surveyed offered a career development course, and this number is only expected to rise (Reese & Miller, 2006). Though Whiston et al. (1998) reported individual interventions as most effective, career development courses have been shown to be a valuable and effective means of delivering needed services (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Reese & Miller, 2006; Komarraju et al., 2014). One-on-one sessions are not always necessary or feasible, and group settings have the ability to reassure undecided students that they are not alone (Van Wie, 2011). Research indicates a range of positive learning outcomes and career development competencies resulting from career-related activities in a classroom environment (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012).

Several studies investigated the effects of a theory-based course on career decision-making for students who were undecided on a major, all finding that students who completed the course showed increased career decision-making self-efficacy (Reese & Miller, 2006; Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Komarraju et al., 2014). Reese and Miller's (2006) course content focused on self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, career decision-making skills and metacognition. Similarly, Hansen and

Pedersen's (2012) course involved self-assessment, exploration of majors and careers related to self-assessment results, and planning action steps to achieve goals.

Students in both studies showed significant increases in all domains of CDMSE, with strongest gains reported in the areas of gathering information, setting goals, and making future plans. In addition, Reese and Miller's (2006) course appeared to lower perceived career decision difficulties, with 76% of participants declaring a major by the end of the career course.

Komarraju et al. (2014) implemented a course focused on increasing career self-efficacy through facilitating success in performance, fostering social support and encouragement, providing role models and reducing anxiety by managing emotional arousal. In addition to improving self-efficacy, results indicated that increased career self-efficacy is a significant predictor of satisfaction with the chosen major. Students who felt more confident about obtaining career-related information and solving career-related problems were more satisfied with the major they had selected.

Experiential learning. Experiential learning includes activities such as internships, cooperative education, and service learning that actively involve the learner and "integrate experience in the world with experience in the classroom" (Esters & Retallick, 2013, p.73). In Komarraju et al.'s (2014) study of a career course, students were assigned nine career-related assignments, however, results indicated that the assignment which provided "concrete and practical knowledge" was the most significant predictor of increased career self-efficacy (p.429). When

psychology majors visited a research lab, this experiential learning opportunity proved a valuable way for students to learn about potential careers.

Undergraduate interns frequently report career development as a benefit of their experience. Kellner (2007) indicates that following an internship experience, students' written self-reflections recognized their experience had influenced their future plans. All participants noted that their internships helped them to gain a better self-understanding and to formalize their post-graduation plans. In another study, after a year-long internship, sophomore and junior undergraduates in life and health sciences programs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis reported their experiences not only increased their knowledge and skills, but helped them to make more informed decisions about the futures. Many viewed the program as helping them to solidify career decisions (Gilbert, Banks, Houser, Rhodes, & Lees, 2014).

Despite much anecdotal evidence, research that empirically demonstrates the benefits of experiential learning is limited (Esters & Retallick, 2013). However, Stringer and Kerpleman (2010) and Esters and Retallick (2013) each found positive career outcomes in their studies related to work experience. Stringer and Kerpleman (2010) found that accumulating a variety of job experiences is associated with greater career decision-making self-efficacy and career identity commitment. Esters and Retallick (2013) studied a work-based learning program that focused on acquiring technical skills, examining connections between coursework and experience, developing research skills, exploring graduate education, and researching career

opportunities. It included ten hours per week of work experience, weekly journals, monthly seminars, a professional poster presentation, and a final portfolio.

Participants indicated the program helped them to clarify their career interests and goals and findings suggested a positive impact on vocational identity and career decision self-efficacy.

Computer-based career-planning and self-assessment systems. Though research has shown that self-directed career interventions have smaller effects than those involving an advisor (Whiston et al., 2003), there are many benefits to computer-based career planning as well as evidence that gains can be enhanced with support from an advisor (Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Since career decision-making concerns are so common, many colleges and universities look to address them in a manner that has the ability to reach all students (Behrens & Nauta, 2014). Computer-based career-planning systems have this potential. Other benefits to this intervention include cost-effectiveness and congruency with students' technologically-driven lifestyles. Students can work autonomously at their own pace, while experiencing a personalized interaction with career information. In addition, current systems are often linked with databases maintained by government agencies such as the O*NET Resource Center, ensuring that high-quality information is provided (Tirpak & Schlosser, 2013).

DISCOVER, FOCUS-2, and Career Cruising are popular computer-based career-planning systems. Each assesses participants' interests, abilities and values, while FOCUS-2 and Career Cruising users can also explore career options (Maples &

Luzzo, 2005; Tirpak & Schlosser, 2013; Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). Separate studies of FOCUS-2 and DISCOVER indicate that use of either program increases career decision-making self-efficacy; DISCOVER also enhanced users' sense of control in making career decisions (Maples & Luzzo, 2005; Tirpak & Schlosser, 2013). Conversely, participants who worked with FOCUS-2 adopted a more pessimistic view of career decision-making, believing it was influenced by external factors rather than under their control. Researchers hypothesize this may be due to the fact that FOCUS-2 does not rank order specific occupations and the amount of information provided may have caused difficulty in processing it (Tirpak & Schlosser, 2013).

Upon independent completion of a widely-used interest inventory called the Self-Directed Search (SDS), users showed an increase in the number of occupations being considered. There was no association with increased career self-efficacy or subsequent career exploration. Authors suggest completing the assessment with a counselor to promote increased career self-efficacy (Behrens & Nauta, 2014). However, following independent work with DISCOVER, some participants met with a counselor to discuss the results, with no significant effects found when counseling was included (Maples & Luzzo, 2005). Other studies, however, indicate more positive results when computer-based assessments are combined with feedback from a counselor. In a study of the Career Cruising program, findings indicated an increase in perceived self-efficacy for those who both completed the computer program and met with their advisor (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). In an earlier study, students

working with the Strong Interest Inventory who received subsequent feedback were more likely to believe they were personally responsible for making career decisions than those who did not receive feedback (Day & Luzzo, 1997).

Intervention components. As illustrated by the above sections, many studies have explored the effectiveness of various career intervention formats. In addition, meta-analysis studies of career intervention literature have attempted to identify intervention formats and student characteristics to determine whether one form of intervention (ie. individual, class, or self-directed) is more effective than another and whether career interventions are more effective for some types of students based on characteristics such as age, race, or gender. Unfortunately, these results have been inconsistent, with the exception of the fact that fully self-directed interventions are typically less effective than other formats (Brown et al., 2003).

Brown et al. suggest that the format of the intervention may be less important than what is done during the intervention itself. Through analyzing 62 career intervention studies, they found five specific components that may be critical to effective outcomes regardless of the format or student characteristics. These components include workbooks and written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, opportunities to gather information on career options, modeling, and attention to building support. Though each component was found to be individually important, combinations yielded even greater effects (Brown et al., 2003).

Written exercises showed the most positive outcomes when used to compare occupations, as well as to write down goals for future careers, along with listing

activities one might engage in to reach these goals. The component of individualized interpretations involved reviewing students' future goals and plans individually with a counselor after computer work. Researchers suggest counselor or advisor contact should focus on plans for "next steps" in career planning. The most effective interventions also introduced students to sources of occupational information, providing time during the session to use these resources, as well as giving assignments to do so outside of the session. Exposure to role models who have experienced career decision-making success were also shown to be beneficial. This could be enacted by facilitators who disclose how they overcame their own career decision-making challenges, or guest speakers who have previously participated in the intervention. Though most career interventions do not focus on helping students build support for their career plans and choices, those that included this component showed substantial effects. Authors suggest implementing written exercises that address the degree to which career choice alternatives will be supported by people in the students' social networks and how students may gain further support (Brown et al., 2003).

Parental Involvement

Since the late 1990s, colleges and universities have noticed a shift in the relationships between traditional-aged students and their parents. Many of today's undergraduate students maintain close relationships with their parents, who are actively involved in their college experience (Wartman & Savage, 2008). In a 2006 national survey of 127 higher education institutions, 93 percent revealed they had

experienced an increase in interaction with parents over the last five years (Carney-Hall, 2008) and the 1997 Gallup Youth Survey reported 90 percent of young people considered themselves to be very close with their parents (as cited in Taub, 2008).

This rise in parental involvement has been attributed to several factors. As the cost of college has skyrocketed, there are high expectations and a sense of entitlement among tuition-paying parents. There is also a growing number of parents who have attended college. They are familiar with expectations and comfortable interacting with the institution. In addition, increased technological communication allows for greater parental awareness of students' everyday lives, and the societal emphasis on parenting has produced a generation accustomed to being heavily involved in their children's activities (Wartman & Savage, 2008).

Today's parents tend to focus particular attention on their children's educational experiences (Carney-Hall, 2008). High parental involvement throughout K-12 education is encouraged and has been shown to have significant positive impacts on personal and academic growth. For both parents and students, the idea that higher education does not allow for the same involvement levels remains a challenging transition. Standards for parental involvement in college are not yet clearly defined or understood, leading to an active and sometimes intrusive role of parents in the lives of college students (Wartman & Savage, 2008; Taub, 2008).

While much of the discussion about the parents of college students focuses on their over-involvement, this behavior does not represent all parents. Today's parents and their individual relationships with their students are each unique and represent

various levels of involvement (Wolf et al., 2009). A study by Wolf et al. (2009) adds to our knowledge of the extent to which parents are involved in their college students' lives. They studied the level of parental engagement in academic and overall contact, finding that the greatest levels of parent involvement were in promoting students' academic and personal well-being. Overall, students reported fairly high levels of parental interest in their academic progress, with less involvement in academic decision-making. Only 3.4% of students reported their parents had influenced their choice of major while 11.8% reported they had influenced selection of a particular course. Students seemed to view their parents as supportive, but did not generally view them as interfering with their academic decision-making.

Parents can be an important source of support for students during their transition to college. They provide reassurance and comfort, as well as advice and honest feedback, often at the request of the student. Though parental support can be helpful to students, the concern is that these activities may hinder student development. When parents take on the student's challenges instead of allowing their child to handle them, this deprives the student of the opportunity to develop the skills to overcome challenges on their own, as well as communicates to the student that their parent does not believe they are capable of solving the problem (Taub, 2008).

Parental involvement does have the potential to be positive, as research suggests their involvement and support is associated with adjustment to college, academic achievement and persistence, decreased stress, and higher expectations among college students (Wolf et al., 2009). Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline, and

Russell (1994) found that parental social support was positively associated with higher academic achievement, especially among those whose parents expressed belief in their skills. In addition, Harper et al. (2012) sought to discover the effects of parental involvement and parental contact on development of a diverse population of undergraduate students. They studied the degree to which parental contact, measured by frequency, and parental involvement, measured by students' perceptions of parental interest or concern in their academic success, corresponds to students' self-assessed academic development, social satisfaction, and sociopolitical awareness. Parental involvement was shown to produce the majority of the significant positive relationships found, while half of the parental contact relationships were negative. These findings indicate support for a balanced relationship between students and parents through which students receive support from their parents while also experiencing some separation in direct contact (Harper et al., 2012). Parental involvement was shown to be most beneficial to first-year students, supporting the need for parent orientations that provide information on the transition to college and the changing student-parent relationship (Harper et al., 2012).

Parental impact on career decisions. Although anecdotal evidence suggests overinvolved parents tend to choose unrealistic majors for their children, there is empirical evidence to suggest otherwise. Pearson and Dellman-Jenkins (1997) surveyed college-bound high school seniors to determine who or what was most influential in their choice of major. The results indicate students are making decisions regarding their choice of major independently. Over half of the participants

selected “other” over mother or father, with the three most frequently listed influences being the student’s individual work experience, academic coursework, or personal experiences (Pearson & Dellman-Jenkins, 1997).

Two additional studies, however, provide evidence of parental influence on career development and decision-making. Stringer and Kerpleman (2010) found that parental support for career predicted both career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration, while Laughlin and Creamer’s (2007) study of female college students, found that parents have a strong influence on decision-making. Though only 15% of participants in Laughlin and Creamer’s study agreed that their decisions were strongly influenced by their parents, 98% listed parents among those whose opinions were important to consider when making decisions. Researchers concluded that though participants realized they should make decisions for themselves, they continued to rely on external authority (Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). Most participants reported that they discussed career-related decisions with a variety of people including family, friends, parents, advisors and teachers. However, parents were most commonly reported as most influential due to the participant’s sense that they were giving advice because they cared for her and knew what was best for her. The trust placed on parents to know “what is best” (p. 24) seems to override the advice of others who may be more knowledgeable but are less trusted because they do not know the student personally. Students who have not developed the ability to use appropriate criteria to judge the quality of advice they receive, may use the nature of their personal relationships with others as criteria for judgments, which reinforces

their dependence on external authority. Laughlin and Creamer (2007) recommend student affairs professionals reconsider the way they work with students' parents. They propose focusing "significant efforts on educating parents about the importance of their role in supporting their student's move toward more self-authored decision-making" (p.50).

Connecting with Parents

As today's traditional-age college students come to campus, many families are ready to share in their experience, introducing a new dynamic to higher education. Parents can be highly influential in the education of their sons and daughters, as well-informed parents are able to assist their students with understanding the importance of campus resources and have been shown to influence levels of student satisfaction during college (Ward-Roof, 2005). Therefore, administrators' viewpoints have shifted from a stance that assumed parent involvement was harmful to student development, to a perspective that sees parents as playing an important role. This has led student affairs administrators to encourage appropriate parental involvement and has increased the quality and quantity of parent programs on college campuses across the country (Harper et al., 2012).

Many campuses provide programs for parents including parent orientation, family weekends, websites, newsletters and a parent board or association (Carney-Hall, 2008). In order to channel parent energy into positive interactions, Mullendore and Banahan (2005b) suggest beginning parent outreach early in a student's college experience. Orientation is one of the first opportunities to include parents in their

student's college education and is the most common parent program, with the most recent National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) survey revealing 100% of institutions surveyed offered some type of parent orientation program (Ward-Roof, Heaton & Coburn, 2008).

Parent orientation. Orientation can be defined as “a collaborative institutional effort to enhance student success by assisting students and their families in the transition to the new college environment” (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005b, p.393). Many institutions now have orientation sessions for parents, often held while students are participating in their own orientation activities. A survey was provided to campuses administrators involved in the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACHUO-I) and NODA and found that the most commonly covered topics at parent orientation were safety, housing, financial aid, health and counseling services, student involvement, social adjustment, family role in transition, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), academic expectations, and food service (Ward-Roof et al., 2008).

Mullendore and Banahan (2005b) suggest using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a framework for parent orientation in order to be sensitive to parents' main concerns. This framework begins with basic needs such as housing, food service, transportation, and financial issues, followed by topics such as campus safety, health services, alcohol, drugs, and other wellness issues. It then progresses to include belonging needs such as academic support, advising, career services, and opportunities for involvement. Mullendore and Banahan (2005b) also explain that

parents want to learn as much as they can about the institution and the services and programs it offers, as well as how they can stay connected to their student.

Orientation is important in helping parents to redefine their role based on the student's increasing independence. Parents need assistance in adjusting to their new lives and learning how to be supportive of their new college student.

Based on years of orientation experience, Ward-Roof suggests keeping the orientation experience personal as much as possible. She supports the inclusion of current students and parents in the presentation, as well as faculty and staff who are experiencing the transition process with their own children (Ward-Roof, 2005). In addition, Coburn and Woodward (2001) explain that effective parent orientation programs should set expectations and define the relationship between parents and the institution. They should acknowledge the impact of the transition to college on both students and family members, as well as provide parents with tools to support their student's success.

Relationship between parents and the institution. To be most effective in creating a positive relationship with parents, colleges and universities must adopt a collaborative approach. Jacobs and With (2002, as cited in Ward-Roof et al., 2008) note that parents who are included in the orientation process view their involvement as a reflection of their partnership in their child's education. All interactions between parents and institution should focus on student success as their shared goal. Research supports the idea that parental support can be helpful to students and it is important to recognize parents for this role (Carney-Hall, 2008). However, administrators must be

sure to balance their pursuit of parental involvement with the need for appropriate boundaries, making it clear that their primary relationship is with the student (Cutright, 2008). For example, parent and family handbooks or calendars can be used to empower parents to encourage their student's use of campus resources. They may provide examples of ways to encourage students' independent problem-solving and outline specific situations and contacts where parents and family members should send their students for specific information and inquiries (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Appropriate contact information for questions or concerns parents may have in the future should also be provided. This sends the message that parents share a valued role in fostering student independence (Coburn & Woodward, 2001).

Acknowledging the transition. Orientation professionals should be aware of the needs of both parents and students, recognizing that the upcoming transition affects both the student and family (Ward-Roof, 2005). For traditional-age first-year students, freedom and responsibility are the primary transition issues. Students must develop self-discipline and time management, as well as possibly living away from home for the first time. To help prepare parents to be effective sources of support for their students, student affairs professionals should provide them with information about what students will be doing in the upcoming weeks and months. They should present information about the academic environment and structure including how expectations will differ from high school. Information about the out-of-class environment including the value in student involvement should be addressed (Price, 2008).

For parents, the transition is equally challenging, and most experience some level of anxiety about their children leaving home (Wartman & Savage, 2008). It is helpful to acknowledge that sending a student to college may be emotionally difficult, but parents should be encouraged to embrace this new phase and recognize the new set of parenting challenges that lie ahead (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005a). Jacobs and With (2002, as cited in Ward-Roof, 2005) found that valuing parents and discussing their own developmental changes leaves them better-prepared to assist their student with their own transitions.

Tools to support students. Parents need to receive clear messages about the goals of student development, as well as specific information about resources provided on a college campus (Carney-Hall, 2008). Mullendore and Banahan (2005a) assert that most parents understand their children will be challenged in the classroom, being asked to stretch beyond what they have previously accomplished and ask questions when needed. They understand that learning can come from making mistakes. However, relatively few parents are familiar with student development theory as a foundation for student growth. Thus, they fail to recognize where increased learning could occur outside of the classroom. Student affairs professionals can help by educating parents on the basics of student development theory, providing information on how to support students without over-supporting them (Price, 2008). They should be upfront about behaviors and approaches that contribute to student acceptance of responsibility and behaviors that inhibit independence (Cutright, 2008). Since many of today's parents are highly motivated

and open to learning about good parenting of a college student, teaching the basics of student development theory can normalize for parents what they will be experiencing and can make it easier to explain how to be partners in students' development (Carney-Hall, 2008).

Parents look to student affairs professionals not only for information, but for reassurance that their student will have a successful college experience. Student affairs professionals can help parents by preparing them for typical challenges students encounter during college such as academic transition difficulties and homesickness. They should present strategies for how to support students in working through these challenges (Price, 2008) as well as provide information to assist their students in accessing resources for success (Carney-Hall, 2008). Increasing parental understanding of campus resources provides parents the tools to help their child. Parents can remind their student of the availability and value of campus resources and encourage them to seek appropriate help on their own.

Addressing career indecision at orientation. Some institutions offer orientation sessions during which academic and career information is provided. This can be an important time to assure students and parents that entering college undecided about an academic major is common and to inform them that specific resources are available to assist in making this important choice (Gordon, 2007). Some students feel a great deal of parental pressure to choose a major; therefore, educating parents on the decision-making process and describing the help students can receive during the exploration process helps to alleviate some of their concerns

(Gordon, 2007). Parents are often fearful of their student “wasting courses” or losing time, and though this may be true in isolated cases, parents need assurance that the time taken for exploration often leads to a more appropriate major choice and a more satisfying result, in addition to providing students with a liberal arts education. Though this type of session provides limited exposure to majors and requirements, it helps “take the mystery out of what appears to be a complicated and confusing body of information” (Gordon, 2007, p. 135).

Additional parent services. In addition to orientation, the most commonly-offered parent programs and services include websites, family weekends, electronic newsletters, handbooks, and parent associations (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Many higher education institutions today are developing specific offices to provide services to families and parent associations to enhance communication and encourage constructive involvement with the institution. Though parent orientation can begin the process of providing the structure and boundaries for parental involvement, it often provides an overwhelming amount of information in a short period of time. Many issues covered at orientation may not be relevant until months later. Therefore, a parent or family weekend can allow an additional opportunity for parents to connect and receive information from the university (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005a). Handbooks are another avenue for communication with parents, as an extension of orientation. They offer an opportunity to take in information when parents have a particular need to know and are now often offered online (Cutright, 2008).

Technology provides much assistance in maintaining communication with parents. Parent web pages and email newsletters can be authored to highlight typical issues at appropriate times of the year (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005a). For example, some institutions offer a calendar featuring month-by-month student development issues and tips for what family members can do to help. In addition, 20% of schools with a parent program also offer a chat room for parents to talk to one another, while still others are experimenting with blogs or message boards specifically devoted to common parent concerns. Technology allows opportunities to provide workshops to families without the need to drive a long distance to campus. North Carolina State University has produced a series of live webcasts that address issues of concern for parents of freshman, sophomores, and transfer students as well as programs on topics such as alcohol and career planning (Saul & Honor, 2005).

Summary

Baxter Magolda and King's self-authorship model addresses cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development, illustrating the transformation from reliance on authority to construction of one's own knowledge and values (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Since most entering college students have not yet developed the capacity for self-authorship, they often rely on their parents' advice when making career-related decisions (Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). Adding depth to the intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship, Marcia's theory focuses on identity development, categorizing the level of exploration and commitment an individual has experienced. In relation to career development, reaching Marcia's *identity*

achievement indicates the pursuit of self-chosen goals, as exploration of occupational options and commitment to an occupational choice have occurred (Evans et al., 2010).

Undecided students represent a significant and diverse population on college campuses, encompassing varied reasons for and levels of indecision. Their career development needs differ based on the individual's developmental level and decision-making skills, as well as the extent of their knowledge of careers, and their own values, interests, and skills (Steele, 2003). Though there is little evidence of a set of common characteristics among undecided students, studies report they demonstrate lower career decision-making self-efficacy and identity commitment, as well as more negative career thoughts than their decided peers (Morgan & Ness, 2003; Bullock-Yowell, et al., 2014).

Career interventions contribute to increased career decidedness, vocational identity, career maturity, and career decision-making self-efficacy (Esters & Retallick, 2013). Interventions involving a career advisor have been shown to be most effective (Whiston et al., 2003) and a developmental career advising approach, focusing on self-awareness, problem-solving and decision-making skills is favored (Van Wie, 2011). Career development courses reassure students they are not alone, while leading to increased career decision-making self-efficacy and a more satisfying choice of major (Reese & Miller, 2006; Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Komarraju et al., 2014). In addition, experiential learning helps students to solidify career interests and goals (Kellner, 2007; Esters & Retallick, 2013), while computer-based career

planning systems allow for addressing career development concerns in a manner that has the ability to reach all students (Behrens & Nauta, 2014).

Many of today's undergraduate students maintain close relationships with their parents, who focus particular attention on their children's educational experiences (Carney-Hall, 2008). While parental over-involvement may hinder student development, appropriate parental support can be helpful to students. It is associated with adjustment to college, academic achievement and persistence, decreased stress, and higher expectations among college students (Wolf et al., 2009). Parents can also be influential in the career decisions of their students; due to their trusted relationship, students are most likely to be influenced by their advice (Laughlin and Creamer, 2007).

In order to promote collaboration, many colleges and universities now offer programs and services aimed directly at parents (Carney-Hall, 2008). Orientation is one of the first opportunities to include parents in their child's college education and separate sessions for parents are often held while students are participating in their own orientation activities (Ward-Roof et al., 2008). Mullendore and Banahan (2005b) explain that orientation is important in helping parents to redefine their role based on the student's increasing independence. Parents need to be taught about the goals of student development and how to be supportive of their new college student. Some institutions offer orientation sessions during which academic and career information is provided. This serves to assure students and parents that entering college undecided about an academic major is common and to inform them of the

specific resources available to assist in making this important choice (Gordon book, 2007).

Conclusion

In order to make a realistic and satisfying career decision, individuals must have adequate self-awareness and occupational information, as well as sound decision-making skills. Many entering college students have not yet engaged in the exploration required to gain this knowledge nor have they developed the cognitive complexity to integrate information to make a well-informed career decision. Instead, many rely on the authority figures closest to them, most often their parents, for advice in choosing an academic major and career goals. Since many parents today desire to remain actively involved in the educational experience of their college students, their involvement presents an opportunity for facilitating increased student engagement in the career exploration process. Teaching parents strategies for effectively and appropriately supporting students during the decision-making process may facilitate students' development of a self-authored career path.

Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction