

1-7-2016

Promoting Self-Authored Career Decision-Making through Parent Partnerships (Project)

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Promoting Self-Authored Career Decision-Making
through Parent Partnerships

by
Kate Thome
April 2015

Master's Project
Submitted to the College of Education
At Grand Valley State University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master of Education

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my project advisor, Dr. Jay Cooper, for guiding me through completion of this final assignment. His expertise and compassion have provided a perfect balance of challenge and support throughout the process. Gratitude should also be extended to Mike Messner for his efforts in helping me to envision practical application of my project. I would also like to acknowledge my ever-supportive parents for being my own personal cheerleaders and my fellow CSAL cohort members for their understanding, encouragement, humor and friendship throughout the course of our master's program.

Kate Thome

Abstract

Many college students are undecided regarding their academic major and career path. Meaningful exploration of interests, abilities, and career alternatives is necessary if students are to make a well-informed and satisfying career choice. However, students often feel pressure to make a decision before sufficient exploration has been experienced. Most college students have not yet developed the capacity to make an autonomous career decision and often rely on their parents for advice. This project examines the effectiveness of common career interventions and addresses the impact of parental involvement, exploring opportunities for colleges and universities to partner with parents. A parent orientation session on the topic of career development is proposed. Teaching parents to play an appropriate role in their student's career development may encourage career exploration and support student growth toward autonomous decision-making.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Making informed career decisions is a challenge for many college students in the United States. The rapidly evolving workplace of the 21st century makes navigating career decision-making more complicated than ever before. Although the vast majority of students report that their number one reason for attending college is “to get a better job” (Eagan, Lozano, Hurtado & Case, 2013, p.35), they frequently lack realistic strategies for attaining this goal (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012). Many traditional first-year students are not developmentally ready to make important career and life decisions (Gordon, 2007); yet, rising tuition costs, institutional policies, and high expectations for performance place pressure on students to make hasty decisions (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Parks, Rich & Getch, 2012; Cuseo, 2005).

Without sufficient self-knowledge or exploration, students often look to authority figures to provide answers rather than seeking this knowledge on their own (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Many of today’s parents maintain close relationships with their college students and may play a role in the academic major and career decisions of their children. Though parents can act as positive partners in the educational experience, extensive involvement can hinder students’ development of their own identity and purpose, preventing them from choosing a career that aligns with their individual skills, interests and values (Taub, 2008). Educating parents on the developmental process involved in career decision-making will serve to increase their ability to support students in making thoughtful, independent decisions.

Importance and Rationale of the Project

Undecided students comprise a substantial population on any college campus. An estimated 20-50% of students enter college without declaring a choice of major (Lewallen, 1995) but one in four express uncertainty regarding their academic path (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012). Those who enter as “declared” are often not certain about their choice, as only 10% report they know “a great deal about their intended major” (Erickson & Strommer, 1991, as cited in Cuseo, 2005, pg. 5). Therefore, it is not accurate to assume that those who enter college with a declared major have truly made a well-informed decision. Many declared students are just as uncertain as their undeclared peers, so it is important to consider that a large majority of incoming students need some level of career advising and assistance (Cuseo, 2005; Spight, 2013).

The importance of career development interventions early in college is indicated by research linking an appropriate major choice and career goals to persistence toward graduation. A lack of motivation due to unclear educational aspirations and goals is found to be one of the most common factors contributing to attrition (Beal & Noel, 1980; Habley & McClanahan, 2004). However, whether a student declares a major when they apply for admission or after several semesters of enrollment is less important than the information that decision is based upon (Spight, 2013). Goal-setting and self-discovery are clearly ongoing throughout college, as 80% of students will change their major at least once during their college career (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). A student who has researched career options and

engaged in exploration to learn more about themselves is more likely to have made a sound decision than someone who makes an uninformed choice (Spight, 2013).

Cuseo (2005) argues that “decided” students who make premature choices of major may be at a greater risk for leaving college than undecided students since their choices reflect a lack of thoughtful planning, insufficient career knowledge, or a lack of realistic self-assessment of their skills, abilities, and interests. Graunke, Woosley, and Helms (2006) found that incoming students who were less committed to a major were more likely to complete their degrees and Lewallen’s (1995) study found that undecided students actually displayed higher levels of academic achievement and were more likely to persist than decided students.

Research suggests that successfully negotiating the personal and developmental tasks related to major selection and career decision-making are important predictors of success in college (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012). Students who participate in career development interventions are also significantly more likely to persist in their education and to exhibit higher academic achievement (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012).

When students make career decisions too early, they may be driven entirely by external factors, rather than exploration and introspection (Cuseo, 2005). The label “undecided” can carry a negative connotation and parents may be eager for their student to choose a major in order to be sure their tuition money correlates with a specific goal. Unlike their decided peers, undecided students are not provided a list of courses to fulfill graduation requirements, and thus sometimes feel a lack of

direction, lack of belonging, and perceived parental disappointment (Mayhall & Burg, 2002). Cuseo (2005) highlights that early decisions about a career path may be due to students being pressured by family, to relieve anxiety about not having a career choice, or because the career is popular or lucrative.

Having been raised with a great deal of structure and rules, today's millennial generation of college students are both trusting of and reliant on authority. Their parents have often been very involved in their lives throughout childhood and tend to remain involved in their college experience. Students commonly maintain frequent communication and positive relationships with their parents. They have benefited from technological advances that allow for greater connectivity and communication and often seek parents for advice rather than independently making decisions (Ward-Roof, 2005). Grace (2006, as cited by Taub, 2008) reports that first-year students communicate with their parents on average 10.4 times per week and 14% of parents of college students in another study reported being asked for advice in academic matters by their students frequently or very frequently (College Parents of America, 2007).

Parents influence their students' career choices and help them develop career plans. Thirty-one percent admitted having great or extreme concern about their students' career planning (College Parents of America, 2007). However, reports suggest that some parents may be going beyond encouragement and support of their college children's career plans and goals. This extensive involvement can interfere with students' development of purpose, as the student is not developing their own life

plan, but instead complying with a plan developed by the parent. For student development to occur, movement beyond reliance on external authority and toward personal autonomy must occur (Taub, 2008).

Student affairs professionals must remember that parental involvement is not necessarily detrimental to students' development. Parents are influential, can positively influence student success, and their involvement is often welcomed by students (Wolf, Sax & Harper, 2009). Therefore, they must be educated about how best to support students without over-supporting them. In order to channel parent energy into positive interactions, campus administrators should begin outreach to parents and families early in their student's college experience. Orientation programs are excellent opportunities to include, engage, and partner with parents and family members, establishing expectations for involvement. Today's parents are highly motivated and open to learning about what good parenting of college students entails. Programs that provide parents with information to assist their children in accessing resources for success and teach the basics of student development theory may be helpful (Carney-Hall, 2008). This will facilitate a form of learning partnership with parents (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004), encouraging them to embrace their role in their child's education without affecting the development of autonomous decision-making.

Background of the Project

When higher education in the United States began in the seventeenth century, it was primarily available only to an elite class of white men. It was designed to build

character and ensure continued responsible leadership of the church and state (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Expanded opportunities for women, more culturally diverse groups, and men not from privileged backgrounds were not available until the late nineteenth century when additional types of institutions began to develop (Roberts, 2007). Later, between World Wars I and II, the increase in public junior colleges, state schools, teachers colleges and technical universities challenged the prestige and purpose of a college education (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). In early colonial colleges, education had been valued for personal enrichment. The liberal education curriculum combined study of the classics, English literature, the humanities and moral virtue. Unlike professional or vocational education, which prepare students for specific careers, it empowered students with a broad knowledge, transferable skills and a strong sense of values (Shoenberg, 2009).

In a historic debate that began in 1936, Robert Maynard Hutchins advocated for liberal education focused on reading the classical writing of “the great thinkers” (Roberts, 2007). He valued the study of these works in order to understand their significance rather than as an attempt to apply them to students’ own experiences. John Dewey conversely believed that learning was most useful when informed by the needs of students and connected to their experiences. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Hutchins’ view of learning was profoundly evident in higher education. However, the balance between intellectual learning detached from experiences and learning connected to students’ needs and experiences slowly began to shift (Roberts, 2007). In the early twentieth century, liberal arts colleges required

students to pursue a common curriculum, while public universities allowed students to move on to more specialized courses after filling their first two years of study with general education courses. As an emphasis on specialized knowledge grew, colleges began to adjust the proportion of required general education courses to those required for a particular major (Fong, 2004). Current pressure from employers, parents and the government has caused many of today's universities to increase focus on preparing students for a career and less on liberal education (Axelrod, Anisef, & Lin, 2001). Yet today's proponents of a liberal education argue that higher education must prepare students for an increasingly complex labor market, citing that 30% of college graduates are likely to eventually work in jobs that do not yet exist (Fong, 2004).

Today's college students and parents, however, are often more concerned with short-term outcomes of getting a job rather than long-term adaptability. Gordon and Steele's (2003) 25-year study of students who were academically undecided when they began their first year of college, found that 70-90% of students consistently indicated they were in college to "prepare for an occupation" (p. 22). The number of students who chose "to find myself", "for personal growth" or "social opportunities" declined over the years (p. 22). The pressures students feel to declare a college major and decide on a career are evident in these statistics; yet, the transition to a global economy, job market changes, and technological innovation make today's world of work an uncertain environment (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012). Career decision-making is further complicated by the astounding number of specialized options. The Occupational Information Network (O*NET) is a continuously updated online

database containing information on hundreds of occupations (National Center for O*Net Development, 2015) and in 2013, the CIRP Freshman Survey was revised to include increased career categories, more than doubling the career options in business, and adding new specifications under the broad category of education (Eagan et al., 2013).

As economic conditions and labor market trends, as well as political, social, generational and cultural norms have evolved over time, so too has the function and philosophy of career development services on college campuses. They have continuously adapted to meet the needs of students and society (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). The earliest “vocational guidance” (Pope, 2000, p.195) began in colonial colleges where in addition to providing moral guidance and advice, faculty often assisted graduates in securing employment. As enrollment and academic offerings expanded, the need for increased vocational guidance developed, becoming one of many responsibilities adopted by student personnel specialists. After World War II, the GI Bill expanded the diversity of students who had access to higher education. A booming economy and the need to place graduating war veterans in jobs gave rise to the expansion of job placement centers on college campuses (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Career centers later shifted focus to placing ownership of career development on students when the field of career counseling experienced tremendous growth in behavioral, developmental, and psychoanalytical theories in the 1950s and 60s. These theories were developed to explain how career decisions are made and in the 1970s and 80s, prompted the emergence of career planning and counseling centers

which focused on helping students and graduates explore careers and plan their own job search (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

The technology and social media revolution of the 1990s and 2000s again reinvented career centers as networking hubs and with the economic downturn of 2008, career and professional development have become significant elements of students' education rather than something they seek only as graduation approaches. Institutions are placing increased emphasis on the function of career centers, and Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) predict increasingly customized and connected career communities as an emerging need. With extensive information available on the internet, students desire more personalized information specific to their needs. In order for career centers to best connect and serve students, they must build strong connections with students' trusted networks within and beyond campus communities, creating opportunities for reinforced support and guidance (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

Though parents remained largely uninvolved in their children's college education for much of history, in recent years, involvement has greatly increased. Beginning with the colonial college role of "*in loco parentis*", faculty offered supervision of students in the place of parents (Thelin & Gasman, 2011, p. 5). In 1961, the doctrine of *in loco parentis* was rejected and in 1971, voting age was lowered to eighteen. College students were viewed as adults and higher education had no immediate need to consider the role of parents (Taub, 2008). However, changing structures of families and campus environments, increased cost of

education, and ease of communication through technology have contributed to a growth in parental involvement and expectations. Colleges and universities must now recognize parents as stakeholders and consider methods for appropriately engaging them as partners in their children's education (Carney-Hall, 2008).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a model orientation program for providing parents with knowledge and strategies to appropriately support students' career development. Using Baxter Magolda's self-authorship (2004) as a theoretical framework, this project will explore the impact of parental involvement on the career development of college students and examine the difficulties many students face when attempting to make appropriate career decisions. It will address the extent to which many of today's parents are actively involved in their student's college experience and investigate opportunities for colleges and universities to partner with parents in order to encourage career exploration and support student growth toward autonomous decision-making.

Objectives of the Project

This project seeks to support the career development of undergraduate students at Grand Valley State University through equipping parents with the knowledge, strategies and resources for an appropriate level of guidance in the career decision-making process. As many of the parents of today's college students tend to be actively involved in their students' college experience, the goal of this project is to educate parents to be informed career development resources, creating opportunities

for reinforced support and guidance. This project aims to encourage a partnership between parents and the university in promoting student career exploration and self-authored career decision-making.

Through a parent orientation session focused on the career development process, this project aims to decrease parental anxiety regarding students' career development process and normalize common student developmental concerns and behaviors. This project seeks to teach parents the importance of career exploration and of informed, autonomous decision-making. Sharing appropriate strategies for supporting students and providing information about available university resources will serve to empower parents to play a productive role in their student's career development.

Through educating parents, the intent of this project is to reduce the pressure placed on students to make hasty and uninformed career decisions. This project seeks to encourage students to begin active participation in the process of career development early in their college experience and to promote the development of self-authored decision-making. In turn, this project intends to positively affect students' sense of purpose, motivation, persistence and satisfaction in their college experience.

Scope of the Project

This project addresses the needs of undecided students, meaning those students who have not yet chosen a major or are considering changing to a different major. The focus is on traditional-age students, rather than returning adult or transfer

students. Since 80% of college students will change their major at some point during their college career, the parent orientation session will be offered to the parents of all incoming students (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). At some point during their student's education, almost all parents are likely to be the parent of an "undecided" student.

There are many reasons for students being undecided about a major, including lack of career information or not being developmentally ready for the tasks necessary to make a decision. This project addresses support for students who are experiencing indecision, however, does not address students who are chronically indecisive. These students have trouble reaching a decision about anything and before a career choice can be made, factors contributing to their existing personal or social conflicts must be addressed through professional counseling (Gordon, 2007).

Many of the parents of millennial students are much more involved in the lives of their children than in previous generations. This project seeks to address the parents of millennial students as a whole, but does not address the variety of differing parenting styles, nor does it account for cultural factors that may affect parenting styles and family relationships. In addition, this project does not distinguish between institutional types. It was designed with Grand Valley State University, a public, four-year institution, in mind, but could be modified for implementation at institutions of a different size, including private schools or community colleges.

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.

Komaraju 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 Komaraju 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

Rising tuition costs, institutional policies, and high expectations for performance place pressure on today's college students to make hasty decisions regarding an academic major (Hansen & Pedersen, 2012; Parks et al., 2012; Cuseo, 2005). Students are often encouraged to commit to a major or career path before having sufficient opportunities to explore their interests, abilities, and career alternatives. Though clear educational and career goals are linked with motivation and persistence (Beal & Noel, 1980; Habley & McClanahan, 2004), students who take the time to engage in exploration in order to make a well-informed choice are more likely to experience academic success and report greater satisfaction with their choice (Spight, 2013; Cuseo, 2005; Lewallen, 1995).

All students could benefit from some level of career intervention during their time in college (Cuseo, 2005; Spight, 2013). Though colleges and universities across the country provide a variety of career-related programs and services, parents are a largely untapped resource in student career development. Many of today's college students are not developmentally ready to make autonomous life decisions. They instead often look to their parents as trusted authorities to provide answers rather than making a decision that is based on their own knowledge and goals (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). New student orientation presents an opportunity to encourage parents to partner with the university in promoting student career exploration and self-authored career decision-making (Carney-Hall, 2008).

The following proposed parent orientation session on the topic of career development will seek to decrease parental anxiety regarding students' career

development process and normalize common student developmental concerns and behaviors. Its objectives include teaching parents the importance of career exploration and of informed, autonomous decision-making. Sharing appropriate strategies for supporting students and providing information about available university resources will serve to empower parents to play a productive role in their student's career development. Through educating parents, the intent of this session is to reduce the pressure placed on students to make hasty and uninformed career decisions, to encourage students to begin active participation in the process of career development early in their college experience and to promote the development of self-authored decision-making.

This chapter will begin with an overview of Grand Valley State University's current parent orientation and the career development information that is shared with parents. It will then outline in detail the information to be presented during the proposed orientation session and describe the contents of a resource to which parents can refer for additional information following orientation. Further recommendations for continuing a parent partnership surrounding career development will be addressed and plans for evaluation of the orientation session, as well as of its long-term impact will be addressed. Finally, plans for implementation of the project will be proposed.

Project Components

Currently at Grand Valley State University, 40 full day parent orientation days are offered throughout the spring and summer each year in conjunction with new student orientation. Upon arrival to campus, families and students are invited to attend an optional resource fair where they can visit with representatives from various campus departments including Housing and Residence Life, Campus Dining, Financial Aid, Grand Valley Police Department, Student Life, and the Metro Health Campus Health Center. There is then the opportunity to embark on a tour of freshman housing before official check-in begins. Next, a welcome presentation is delivered to both parents and students before the groups are split to attend separate sessions for the remainder of orientation.

With their students now independently attending information sessions, all parents and families participate in a thirty-minute session focused on academics and finances, as well as a short presentation about campus safety. Parents then eat lunch together on campus and attend three informational sessions in smaller groups during the afternoon. These sessions cover both on and off-campus living, the transition to college, academic and career success, and provide an opportunity to ask additional financial aid questions. Following these sessions, parents and students come together to listen to a student panel share information about campus life and are offered another opportunity to tour campus housing before the end of the day.

A career development component is a new addition to parent orientation for the 2015 year, with a 30-40 minute “Academic and Career Success” session being offered. This session, facilitated by the Student Academic Success Center and Career

Center, aims to inform parents of student behaviors that contribute to academic and career success. Topics include making connections and using available resources, establishing a sense of self through participating in meaningful experiences, and making informed decisions through creating and adjusting short and long term plans and goals.

It is the objective of this project to inform and add to what is currently being offered during this orientation session in order to more effectively assist parents in supporting their student's career exploration and development of self-authorship. This session is meant to be part of each new student orientation day, promoting parents as partners in their student's career development. Since it is likely that almost all parents will be the parent of an undecided student at some point, and because all students can benefit from further career exploration, the session will be offered to all parents of first-year students.

As students' basic needs such as housing, food service, and safety are parents' most immediate concerns, these topics are addressed early in the orientation day (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005b). The career development session will be offered later in the day. However, parents are often highly concerned about finances which they may perceive as being affected by an undecided major. Parents often worry that their student is "wasting" time or courses, and therefore money, by not having settled on a major (Gordon, 2007). Thus, this session is important in addressing this common concern. In addition, this session will serve to aid students in fulfilling the

more advanced needs of esteem and self-actualization by providing parents with tools to facilitate their development.

An outline of topics covered in the session can be found in Appendix A. The session will begin with the goal of reducing parental anxiety regarding the career development process and career decision status of their student. It is hoped that in turn this will decrease parental pressure placed on the student to decide on a major before they are ready to do so. Statistics regarding the percentages of undecided students both nationally and at Grand Valley will be presented, serving to normalize the experience of being undecided. The benefits of waiting to choose a major will be shared including increased time for exploration of a variety of interest areas and the reality that students who enter as undecided often show higher academic achievement and rates of degree completion (Lewallen, 1995; Graunke et al., 2006). Statistics about the number of major changers will also be presented along with the statement that students who have declared a major are likely to change it (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It should be stressed that whether a student declares a major when they apply for admission or after several semesters of enrollment is less important than the information that decision is based upon (Spight, 2013).

In order to reassure parents that there is professional support for their student throughout this important process, presenters will explain that Grand Valley provides a variety of resources to help students progress through a structured career development process in order to make a decision that is right for them. It should also be noted that Grand Valley's general education curriculum is designed to provide the

opportunity to explore a variety of potential interest areas while earning credit toward graduation. Undecided students are assigned to an advisor who can assist them in finding the resources to make an informed decision and help them to develop a course schedule that includes general education requirements and courses that provide exploration. Many students do not declare a major until their second year, and though it is not a problem to enter college as undecided, parents will be informed that it is important for students to begin participating in career exploration early in order to make a timely decision. In addition, having clear career goals can help increase students' motivation and enjoyment of their college experience (Beal & Noel, 1980; Habley & McClanahan, 2004).

Next, the structured process of career development will be briefly shared with parents. This process includes gaining knowledge of one's own goals, values, abilities, skills, and interests, as well as career knowledge such as duties, work environment, salary, educational requirements, and job outlook. The goal is for students to make appropriate career decisions that are based on a combination of career and self-knowledge and which are in alignment with personal goals (Gordon, 2007). Once a decision has been made, knowledge should continue to be gained in order to evaluate the decision. Decisions and plans can then continue to be modified as more knowledge and experience is gained.

Presenters will then teach parents about career development challenges their student is likely to experience and the appropriate parent role in the process. The goal of sharing this information is to help parents feel prepared to support their student

through these upcoming challenges. It is hoped that after this session parents will be empowered to encourage their student's career exploration and to help foster their independent decision-making skills. Career-related resources at Grand Valley will also be shared and parents will be advised to remind their students about their value, encouraging their use when appropriate. This will serve to promote positive career development experiences for students.

Using Baxter Magolda and King's Learning Partnerships Model for developing self-authorship and Marcia's theory of identity development as frameworks, a simple overview of common student development issues regarding career development will be addressed. Parents will be informed that most beginning college students are reliant on authority figures such as parents, teachers, or advisors when making decisions (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). They often believe there is just one correct answer that these authority figures must know. The importance of the parent's role will be addressed by explaining that they are the most influential and most-often consulted source for career advice. Because they trust their parents and feel they have their best interests in mind, students may even put aside advice from others who have more expertise if their ideas do not align with those of their parents (Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). Since parents are so often looked to for advice, their important role in helping to foster independent decision making should be recognized.

It will then be shared that some of the goals of higher education include helping students to understand that knowledge is complex and that there is not always just one correct answer, but multiple interpretations. We also want students to

evaluate the opinions of others and to understand that their own experiences are valid and to consider both their own and others' shared knowledge when making a decision (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). It should be shared that students are often rewarded by parents and universities for choosing a major early, even if it is not made based on their own "internal compass" (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p. 236). However, during college, we can help them progress from relying on their parents and other authority figures, to making decisions on their own so that they are more prepared to make important personal, career, and relationship decisions later in life. If we help students learn to make their own decisions, they will 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, interests, and abilities. This can help to improve their educational experience and preparation for a career after college (Baxter Magolda, 2003).

As their student's most trusted advisors, parents have the ability to help foster students' independent decision-making. Presenters will then refer to the handout (Appendix B) and explain some of the strategies that are listed. These strategies were chosen as they support the shift from relying on others to making autonomous decisions. They are based on Baxter Magolda and King's Learning Partnerships Model and serve to validate students' capacity to know, define learning as mutually constructed meaning, and situate the learner in his or her own experience (2004). Particular attention will be paid to developing the intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship. Developing a stronger sense of identity through engaging in exploration

will serve to encourage students to define their own values, interests, and skills, and consider these factors in their decisions. It also serves to validate the knowledge they have gained through these experiences and to use it as the basis for continued learning and decision-making.

Marcia's theory of identity development will be drawn upon to help explain the importance of exploration. Presenters will explain that some students may not have begun exploring, while others may have already engaged in some exploration. Some may have made a decision, while others may think they have made a decision but will likely change it later. If students have made a decision already, it may not be based on sufficient career or self-knowledge. It may have been chosen to please others, because other options have not been considered, because the major is popular, or for a variety of other reasons. In order to be sure students make a well-informed decision, exploration should be encouraged for all first-year students. Even if they are tentatively decided, exploration will assist in evaluating the current choice or exploring options that have not yet been considered. In order to gain the necessary knowledge, students will go through a stage where they explore many different opportunities and experiences before gaining enough information to make an informed major and career choice. During this process they will likely experience anxiety, uncertainty, and feel a lack of direction. They may try a variety of new and different experiences or may change their major several times. This is not a negative occurrence, but represents progress in student development as self and career knowledge is gained (Marcia, as cited in Evans et al., 2010). It should be mentioned

that it is important for students to go through this developmental experience. Parents need not “rescue” a student by making choices for them. This deprives the student of the opportunity to come to his or her own conclusion. It is important to be encouraging, but to allow students to handle this challenge, as it will help them build the capacity to overcome future challenges, as well as communicates the parents’ belief in their capability to make a decision (Taub, 2008).

Following this stage, students will be able to make a more informed decision based on their newly discovered knowledge about career alternatives, as well as what they have learned about their own interests and abilities. Therefore, being undecided presents an opportunity to explore and make a decision that is truly self-authored. Parents will be asked to refer to their handout (Appendix B) for suggestions of ways to promote exploration and presenters will review examples of these opportunities as well as resources at Grand Valley to support exploration. Informational materials from the Career Center and Student Academic Success Center could also be provided.

Next, the importance of building student confidence should be addressed. This will serve to validate students’ knowledge and encourage them to share it when constructing meaning, in addition to building career decision-making self-efficacy. Presenters will explain that this time of uncertainty can be stressful for students and the more uncertain a student is feeling, the greater his or her need for personal support (Gordon & Kline, 1989). It is important for parents to encourage student participation in the career development process, and to welcome and be respectful of their ideas. Student confidence in their ability to make a career decision is important

as those who believe they are in control of the process and are capable of making a sound decision are more likely to participate in the career development process and to make a satisfying career decision (Bandura, 1977; Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Maples & Luzzo, 2005; Komarraju, et al., 2014). Parents will be referred to the handout (Appendix B) for specific strategies.

If time and resources allow, the presentation could also be complemented by upper-class students and parents sharing their personal stories of successful career decision-making. This could be done in person or through the use of video testimonies. Ideally, presenters would be parents of college students and could share their own personal experiences as well (Ward-Roof, 2005).

Additional Recommendations

The orientation session this project outlines serves as the first step toward partnering with parents to more strongly support students' career development process. There are multiple opportunities beyond orientation to continue this initiative. Should a parent website be developed, the information shared during this session could be added to a webpage. This would serve as a resource to which parents could easily refer back and would allow for additional information to be included. The orientation session could be recorded and uploaded to this website as well, allowing for families of transfer and non-traditional students to benefit.

The orientation session is an introduction and overview for supporting and understanding student career development. Additional services could be developed to delve deeper into the topics touched upon in this orientation session. For example, a

series of additional webinars, email newsletters, or webpages could be created. Alternatively, sessions could be offered during an on-campus event such as family weekend. Topics could focus on the use of specific resources or how to support different decision-making styles, and could include case studies for guided practice. In addition, discipline-specific career information could be shared. For example, information for helping students choose a specialization within the healthcare field or ideas for career direction within a broad major such as communications.

Project Evaluation

Evaluation of this orientation session will involve multiple measures. It will expand upon the current survey administered following parent orientation by adding several questions focused specifically on the career development information session. These questions will gather quantitative data regarding the extent to which parents feel the objectives of the orientation session were met. They will also invite qualitative data through an open-ended question on the perceived effectiveness of this information session. The purpose of these survey questions will be to assess the session in order to make improvements for subsequent years. A copy of the parent orientation survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

In addition to immediate surveys following the orientation session, a survey could be administered by email to parents at the end of their child's freshman year. Survey questions focused on perceived preparation for supporting student career development could be administered as an independent survey or combined with a parent survey addressing a variety of issues regarding the experience of parenting a

first-year college student. In regards to career development, this survey could address which programs and resources were accessed and what was found to be most valuable. Questions could also address how parents viewed their student's reaction and whether or not their own knowledge was of benefit to the student. Responses indicating a desire for additional or different information would warrant changes to the orientation session or development of alternate services to address student career development from a parent perspective. Responses indicating confidence in assisting students and positive outcomes for their student would indicate the orientation session impacted parents and students in the desired manner. A copy of the end of the year parent survey can be found in Appendix D.

A parent focus group could also be conducted to gain additional qualitative data and suggestions. The Parent Association Advisory Committee could be consulted to gather their experience with supporting students' career decision-making and suggestions for additional information or support that could be provided.

Since the ultimate goal of this project is to positively affect student career development, in addition to collecting information on parent experiences, data on the impact of the program could be assessed through collecting responses from recent alumni. Quantitative and qualitative data could be collected through an email survey or through additional questions being added to the current telephone surveys conducted through the GVSU Alumni Association. Questions should address student perceptions of parental support for career decision-making, focusing on the extent to which parents were involved in students' career decision-making, their approaches to

this involvement and how students felt this affected their choices and development. Data would be used to make changes to parent programming or to confirm its positive impact. Questions for this survey can be found in Appendix E.

Project Conclusions

College students often feel pressure to decide on an academic major or career path before sufficiently exploring their interests, abilities, and career alternatives. In addition, most have not yet developed the capacity to integrate multiple perspectives in order to make a decision, a process necessary for appropriate career decision-making. Today's students often turn to their parents as trusted sources of advice when making major life decisions. However, it is important for students to engage in exploration, learning about themselves and potential career options in order to make a well-informed career decision. If students are challenged to develop more autonomous decision-making, they will be more prepared to make decisions later in life. Rather than perpetuating student reliance on authority, parents should be educated to support their students in developing the ability to make independent decisions. Through partnering with parents, higher education institutions can equip them with the tools to encourage exploration and foster development of self-authorship.

Plans for Implementation

This project will be shared with the parent orientation committee at Grand Valley State University. It is hoped that it will become a useful tool in extending the information provided to parents about student career development during orientation

and serve to provide reinforced support and guidance to students. More in depth information could be provided through extending the orientation session to include a webpage, handbook, or series of webinars. Though this project was developed with Grand Valley State University's parent orientation in mind, it could be modified for use with specific academic departments or during another event such as Family Weekend. Additionally, it could be modified for use at other institutions. Parts of the project such as the handout could also stand alone for use during the resource fair section of orientation. Since many of the suggestions for parental support are not truly limited to career development, they could be included in a parent handbook or on a webpage for parents as suggestions for fostering students' independence during college. This would help parents in redefining their parent-child relationship and navigating how to continue their involvement with their college student while also supporting their independence.

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Appendix A

Career Development Parent Orientation Session Outline

Objectives

- Parents will feel reduced anxiety regarding their students' career decision-making progress
- Parents will be introduced to common student development behaviors related to career development and what they can expect their student to experience
- Parents will gain an understanding of the process of career development
- Parents will understand specific strategies for supporting their student through the career exploration and decision-making process

- Parents will be aware of career development resources available at Grand Valley State University
- Students will participate in increased exploration to gain self and career knowledge to make well-informed career decisions
- Students will progress in their journey toward self-authorship
- Students will gain confidence increased confidence in their abilities to make a career decision

Session Outline

- Introduction
 - Undecided and major changer statistics
 - Benefits and realities of being undecided
 - Information on which the decision is based is more important than timing
 - Initial mention of support at GVSU and general education curriculum
- Career Development Process
 - Gaining self and career knowledge
 - Integrating to make a decision that aligns with goals
 - Evaluation through continued exploration and reflection
- Student Development and Strategies for Support
 - Decision-making (Baxter Magolda)
 - Strategies for promoting independent decision-making
 - GVSU Resources
 - Exploration (Marcia)
 - Ideas for encouraging exploration
 - GVSU Resources
 - Showing support
 - Suggestions for building confidence (Self-Efficacy)
- Student and parent testimonies

Appendix B
Parent Resource Handout

Supporting the Career Development Process



ENCOURAGE EXPLORATION

- Take an introductory course in a field of interest
 - Enroll in US 102, a Career Education class
 - Meet with your advisor or the advisor for a major you are considering
gvsu.edu/advising/
 - Get involved on campus
Office of Student Life
1110 Kirkhof Center, 331-2345
gvsu.edu/studentlife
 - Volunteer
Community Service Learning Center for ide
1110 B Kirkhof Center, 331-2468
gvsu.edu/service/
 - Join a club
Visit orgsync.com to view GVSU's over 300
registered student organizations
 - Attend the Majors Fair in November
gvsu.edu/sasc/undecided/majors-fair-12.htm
 - Take Focus 2, a free online career assessment tool
gvsu.edu/careers/assess-yourself-96.htm
 - Explore additional resources for undecided students
gvsu.edu/sasc/undecided/
 - Try a new job
gvsu.edu/careers/lakerjobs-18.hi
 - Talk to friends or family members in fields of potential interests. See if you can visit them at work.
- Visit the Career Center**

 - *Meet with an advisor to discuss your Focus 2 results*
 - *Make a Career Exploration appointment*
 - *Take detailed self-assessments*
 - *Connect with professionals through job shadowing and informational interviewing*
 - *Find out about internship opportunities*
 - *Attend events: Talk with employers at "Careers In" events or visit an employer's work site with "Careers At"*
- Study abroad
gvsu.edu/studyabroad
 - Gather information from career websites
www.onetonline.org/
www.bls.gov/ooh/

BUILD CONFIDENCE

- Welcome your student's ideas and show respect for their opinions
- Voice confidence in your student's ability to make a career decision
- Remind your student of positive decisions he or she has made in the past
- Help your student experience success by praising small steps such as meeting with a career advisor or joining a new club
- Be positive about the career exploration steps your student has taken so far
- Remind your student of your support. Suggest others who may be able to provide information and support for specific careers being considered
- Help your student to connect with role models for good career decision-making. Share your story or suggest they talk with a specific friend or family member
- Be patient and encourage your student to enjoy the process

IMPROVE DECISION- MAKING SKILLS

- Challenge your student to articulate goals. What life do they envision for themselves?
- Suggest they write down goals and list action steps needed to reach them
- Suggest creation of a "vision board"
- Encourage your student to identify positives and negatives of different choices by creating a pros and cons list
- How would each choice affect progression toward their goals?
- Encourage your student to examine his or her values. What is important to him or her in a career?
- Have them list their strengths and weaknesses. How do they know they possess these? Which careers would allow use of strengths?
- Encourage reflection on their experiences. What did they like and dislike? Why? How could they learn more? Suggest keeping a reflective journal
- Remind them there is more than one "correct" answer.
- Ask about their decision making process. Ask "why" and "how" they came to a certain conclusion.
- Encourage evaluation of the advice they receive. Have them make a list of career fields in which they know someone who has first-hand knowledge and discuss areas where they feel they have access to reliable information. Consider limits of others' perspectives and discuss how reliable information can be obtained.
- Help them to anticipate potential future challenges
- Encourage meeting with an advisor

Appendix C
Parent Orientation Survey

I am aware of career development issues my student may experience during college.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I understand the components of the career development process.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I know where to direct my student for career-related concerns.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I feel confident about the support I can provide to my student throughout the career development process.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I feel anxious about my student's current stage of career development.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I plan to assist my student by directing him/her to the career field I know is best.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Please share constructive comments or suggestions for improvement:

Appendix E
Alumni Survey Questions

How did you choose your major or career? What factors were considered?

Who influenced or aided in your decision?

Did your parents help you in making your career decision? If so, how?

How did you feel about your family's or parent's involvement or lack of involvement in your career decision-making process? How could your parents have improved their approach to supporting you?

What was the most difficult aspect of choosing a major or career?

How satisfied are you with your career? Would you make any changes if you could make the decision over again?

Did you utilize any career development resources on campus? How did you know about these resources?

Did your parents or family attend freshman orientation with you?

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
ED 693/695 Data Form

NAME: Kate Thome

MAJOR: (Choose only1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult & Higher Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Differentiation	<input type="checkbox"/> Library Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Content Spec	<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Level Ed
<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSAL	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> School Counseling
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Level Ed
<input type="checkbox"/> ECDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Ed Admin
<input type="checkbox"/> TESOL		

TITLE: Promoting Self-Authored Career Decision-Making through Parent Partnerships

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1)

SEM/YR COMPLETED: Winter 2015

Project
 Thesis

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL _____

Using key words or phrases, choose several ERIC descriptors (5 - 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your project. ERIC descriptors can be found online at:

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=Thesaurus&_nfls=false

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Career Development | 6. College Students |
| 2. Career Choice | 7. Parent Influence |
| 3. Career Guidance | |
| 4. Orientation | |
| 5. Parents | |