

BENEFIT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT
FOR PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS



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Abstract

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Research has shown almost 50% of students entering into their freshmen year of college are undecided and almost 70% of college students will switch their major at least once throughout their college career. Students struggle with making self-efficacy decisions about their career plans at such a young age, so having guidance by career programs and counselors will guide students in a path. This paper details how a successful career development program can influence students' decision making and self-efficacy of career plans.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
APPROVAL PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	
Statement of the Problem	
Definitions of Terms	
Method of Approach	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
The History of Career Inventories	
Patterns and Trends in Career Counseling	
Impacts of Career Development Interventions	
Summary	
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	18
IV. REFERENCES	19

Chapter One: Introduction

Roles in higher education have changed substantially in the last 100 years. Equal rights, employment laws, technology advances, and new methods of communications are just a few things that have affected higher education. As career options become more diverse, students are faced with having to choose their own paths, rather than those commonly prescribed via social expectations.

Lepre (2007) estimates that between 20% and 50% of students enter their freshmen year as undecided, and between 50% and 70% of undergraduate students will change their major and career plans at least once during their college career (Lepre, 2007). For many students, it becomes very difficult to choose a major or career plan. This is a result of little preparation on academic performance and little knowledge regarding career plans (Lepre, 2007).

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 96% of the nation's population makes the college enrollment as of 2014. Considering the six-year path for first-time college students enrolled in 2008, there were 2.7 million students enrolled in college but only 55% of those students finished a degree program by 2014. Individuals that started at a two-year college and transferred to a four-year college presented only 16.1% of student graduates (Wilson, 2015).

Thomson (2010) has shown that with the use of career preparation classes and career programs, it is possible to help students with their career plan. This paper will outline various studies which explore both advantages and disadvantages of career programs.

Statement of the Problem

With new and diverse career fields continuing to grow and change, prospective entry level college students have a more difficult time deciding on a major or career path without help from career counselors or advisors.

Does the presence of career programs improve student outcomes?

Definition of Terms

Theory of planned behavior- The model's main propositions suggest that people will behave as they intend to behave as long as the behavior will allow them to obtain favorable outcomes and the behavior meets the expectations of others who are important to them (Lepre, 2007).

Method of Approach

Information for this paper was obtained via searches of library databases and other internet sources. Search terms used were Career Development, Career Counseling, Career Assessment. And History Career Development.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Chapter two will discuss the positive impacts that career development programs have provided for young adults. In this chapter, literature reviews will show the history of career inventories, career programs that have been successful the young adults and previous trends that relate to career development through the years.

The History of Career Inventories

Career assessments and interest inventories can be dated all the way back to 1914 when the first career assessment was created. Through this past century, career assessments and interest inventories have changed direction enormously. These were created by the early pioneers to see what had influenced individuals in their career options (Harrington & Long, 2013).

From 1914 into the early 1930's there was a heavy focus on gender-based career assessments. Interest inventories presume that a worker will be happy in a job if his or her interests match those of satisfied, successful workers in that job. During this time E.K. Strong and other theorists believed interests for women and men were gender specific, so career assessments were developed separately by gender. A female's interests were matched only against successful females in a profession, not against interests of successful males. In 1927, E.K. Strong discovered that the Carnegie Interest Inventory was biased based on gender. This prompted Strong to create an interest inventory specifically for females called The Vocational Interest Blank for Women in 1933 (Harrington, & Long, 2013).

This interest inventory was similar to the men's version, with eight types of items that included preferences for: occupational activities, school subjects, hobbies and amusements, occupational activities, kinds of people, forced choice of preferences and activities, and self-identification with various personal characteristics (Harrington & Long, 2013). Items in this

inventory were scored based on the similarity of the woman's interests and the characteristic interests of women in those designated occupations (Harrington & Long, 2013).

Different editions of the Strong inventory were created in the following years. The purpose of the new editions was to update the number of occupations each inventory offered. In 1974, the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory was created. This inventory was no longer a gender specific exam and is still used today as a measure of interests. This new inventory was one of the first to be created based on a theory. This inventory was based on John Holland's theory, which posited six types of interest (Harrington, & Long, 2013).

In 1947, a second theory-based assessment was created. The University of Chicago's Psychometric Laboratory entitled it *L.L. Thurstone's An Interest Schedule*. This assessment incorporated Eduard Spranger's "six types of men" theory. Scoring for this assessment categorized examinees into six categories, taking into account the following career areas: physical science, biological science, computation, business, expectative, persuasive, linguistic, humanitarian, artistic, and manual (Harrington, & Long, 2013).

Throughout the following years these assessments and inventories continued to be updated based on Department of Labor information. Although the assessments are not used in today's career counseling, they created its foundation. The field has come a long way since the early 1900's to provide more adequate evaluation information for future students.

Patterns and Trends in Career Counseling

Looking back through the development of career counseling, there is an observable pattern of obstacles with which many counselors continue to battle: the granting and withdrawing of time and funding for career counseling. With new school guidelines like the "No Child Left Behind Act" created in 2001, school counselors struggle with competing for students'

time. With most schools focusing on educational attainment, little time and resources can be devoted to helping students develop future career paths. Counselors to have less ability to pull students from classes to provide career counseling.

From the 1960's to early 2000 the status of career counselors swung back and forth between being focused on education and being refocused to career guidance. In the early 1970's there was a heavy focus on career counseling due to the number of new occupations which required more than a high school diploma, and demanded proper training. But by the mid-1980s, schools' focus had shifted back to education and away from career guidance (Anctil, Dahir, Schenck, & Smith, 2012).

As stated before, a common theme that has occurred in school career counseling is the balancing of college preparation and vocational education. Political issues have created a constant struggle for counselors to find a balance between the two (Anctil et al., 2012). The ever-changing focus of government funding always seems to affect the education departments at the state and local level. The issue arises as to where to spend the money that each school is given. Most schools choose to put the money toward reading and math departments while homemaker and wood shop classes may be non-existent within some schools.

A problem that has affected career counseling in the past 20 years is how to help students with their planning for future jobs and careers. Professionals in the early 20th century only worried about students going from school to work; now most students have the option to either go directly into the labor force, or continue their education into college. Further, the speed of change in technology fields means students may enter a job that currently does not exist.

A new focus of career counseling is creating career pathways for students. Career pathways are focused on helping students find rewarding first jobs in a field where advancement

in the career is possible. To accomplish this, counselors must connect with businesses having successful employees. With this change in career trends, counselors become more of an agent to network so that schools and industry can work together to help students along in a career path (Schaefer, 2012).

Impacts of Career Development Interventions

Through this section we will explore past research which shows how career development programs and university assistance in the career planning process may benefit incoming freshmen. Over the past decade, career opportunities have changed for students. These changes leave many young adults entering college unable to make a confident decision on career options. With guidance in career path options students may gain more self-efficacy in making a sound decision.

According to Hughey-Commers (2011) talking with students about careers at an early age can influence their future career success. Hughey-Commers was part of a new career education department at the University of Virginia that was developing new programs to get students involved in career choices. The purpose of these programs was to get local schools involved with career education and preparing students for the future.

Starting with the early grades, the program created a foundation for these students to dream about their future by exposing them to positive role models in the community. The middle and upper school grades focused on exploring different pathways of careers and recognizing the direction needed for these pathways. One program featured lectures by community role models. The majority of these role models came to speak during luncheons. Students in fifth grade and higher were the participants. The luncheons featured discussions and presentations about career success and career pathway to particular jobs. Another aspect of this career education program

was hands-on activity for middle school students and shadowing experiences. Also, once a year the schools had a career expo that provided many different careers and role models to talk about their day-to-day activity at their job (Hughey-Commers, 2011).

At the beginning, this program did not have a way to evaluate its success. All feedback from these opportunities for students was based on verbal feedback from the students. Feedback from the older students indicated that they enjoyed the hands-on activities, and that the luncheons were and educational (Hughey-Commers, 2011). This program seemed to be a success, but without further evaluation from students there is no way to say for sure it was beneficial for most students.

Helwig (2008) and Bimrose, McIlveen and Morgan (2012) present similar studies looking at the longitudinal effects of career development programs. Bimrose, McIlveen & Morgan (2012) conducted research over a five year period with the high school seniors in this study participated in three career education classes. In these classes they discussed career interests and the opportunities within their ideal career paths. Helwig (2008) performed a fifteen year study starting at the age seven. Each year parents were instructed to document their child's interest in careers. During their senior year, each student took another survey which included standard inventories. Five years after graduation, all students received postcards asking questions about their career paths. (Helwig, 2008)

Results in the Bimrose, McIlveen and Morgan (2012) study were qualitative. Overall, those who participated in this study provided positive feedback regarding their career plan. In contrast, Helwig (2008) showed quantitative results from a Likert-scale assessment of high school students who had not participated in a specific career counseling program. The main theme of questions was, "high school provided me the career direction I need." The results

showed there was a lack of preparation in high school to get the individuals ready for college. Participants of this study mentioned their parents were influences on their career decision (Helwig, 2008).

Taken together, the results for these two studies may show an advantage to providing career counseling classes. However, in both studies there was what researchers call a mortality threat. Helwig (2008) started with 103 participants and only 35 participants provided feedback after the five years. Bimrose, McIlveen & Morgan (2012) started with 50 participants and only 23 participants answered the follow-up questions. The purpose of these two studies put together is to show the effects of career program in high school versus tracking an individual's career outcome while providing little guidance.

Helwig (2008) presented results in his study that suggests parent involvement plays a role in students' outcomes. Cui and Gordon (2015) present research which concludes that positive parenting impacts career success for young adults. Cui and Gordon (2015) created a longitudinal study that explores the impacts of parent involvement and discovered that attentive parenting relates to students' future career success. Cui and Gordon looked to explore Bandura's social learning theory in relation to young adult's career success.

Data that was used for this study was collected in four separate waves. Research was only collected on two of the wave periods, however. In wave one (1995-1996) Cui and Gordon collected data that measured parenting and in wave four (2007-2008) they measured outcomes of young adults' career choices. Wave one consisted of 20,745 adolescents in grades seven through twelve and wave four consisted of 15,701 participants. Individuals in this study participated in in-home interviews that related to demographic information, family structure, parenting, parent-adolescent relationship, peer relations and adolescent adjustment (Chui & Gordon, 2015).

The measurements that were used assessed: positive parenting behavior, career success in young adulthood, and educational attainment in young adulthood. The positive parenting behavior scale measured the amount of involvement parents had in students' school-related activities, asking questions such as how often the parent had talked about their schoolwork or talked about other things going on in school. The career success scale that was measured in wave four measured career satisfaction, career autonomy, and career commitment. Participants rated their satisfaction with their job and income. Responses for the career success scale ranged from one (extremely satisfied) to five (extremely dissatisfied). The educational attainment in young adulthood was assessed in wave four, measuring the highest level of education that was completed (Cui & Gordon, 2015).

A statistical software package called Stata was used to correlate the two waves that were researched in this study. The mean for positive parenting was .31, career satisfaction was 3.86 and career autonomy had a mean of 1.89. The majority of the participants reported an income of \$35,000 and educational attainment was a mean of 14.67 (Cui & Gordon, 2015).

Results in this longitudinal study supported the researchers' two hypotheses. The first proposed that positive parenting during adolescence would have a positive impact on career success. The results agreed with what the Cui and Gordon expected. The more parents were involved in schoolwork and other activities, the higher the coefficient was with the career success. The second hypothesis proposed that the effect of positive parenting during adolescence was related to educational attainment. The first wave strongly supported this hypothesis whereas wave four had a little lower correlation between the two (Cui & Gordon, 2015).

Although this study by Cui and Gordon present evidence that positive parenting during adolescence relates to career success, this study does have a few shortcomings. The first

shortcoming in this study is the self-report. Individuals self-report their parenting style. A useful change would be to have the parents observed and rated as to use of positive parenting. This study also did not account for other influences during adolescence and young adulthood. Things like geographic area, family income, and non-family mentoring could influence career success. Also, future studies could include pretests and posttests of career motivation or career self-efficacy. The next few studies will give examples of how self-efficacy for career decisions can be influenced in young adults.

Recent research performed by Caine-Bish, Chuang, and Walker (2009) tested the effects of students' academic majors on their ability to make a self-efficacy career decision. This particular study involved students at Kent State University. Participants were junior or senior status in the following majors: Hospitality Management, Human Development & Family Studies, and Nutrition/Dietetics. A total of 150 undergraduate students participated in this study with 46% being Hospitality Management majors, 20% being Human Development & Family Studies majors and 34% being Nutrition/Dietetics (Caine-Bish et al., 2009).

Three questionnaires were used for the study that included: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Short Form, Career Outcome Expectations, and Commitment to Career Choices. These three questionnaires focused on the commitment of each student to their major, their ability to use self-efficacy in their career decision-making, and their assessment of their own ability to set career goals (Caine-Bish et al., 2009).

This study showed the effects an academic major may have on a student's ability to make career decisions. Among the three majors, all students felt the biggest influence to their career decisions were faculty and department advisors. Hospitality Management majors' indicated the greatest effect, showing that advisors helped them manage job interviews and identify other

career alternative. However, these majors had the lowest scores on the career outcomes expectations measure. The self-efficacy in Hospitality Management could be influenced by the required career/professional-oriented classes required. Other results for Hospitality Management majors showed a lack of self-efficacy when it comes to career options. Human Development & Family Studies students were unsure about their career choice, while Nutrition/Dietetic students have had no experience in fields before graduation due to licensing issues, thus making it hard for students to predict their ability find jobs after college (Caine-Bish et al., 2009).

Although this study lacks some demographic information from students, it is a well done study which shows the need for young adults to have guidance in career decision making during college. This study showed the lack of ability to make self-efficacy decisions in early adulthood, even though the faculty and advisors in their academic programs provided useful help. The next study will show how an online module can influence students to make better career decisions following career development training.

Thomson (2010) created an online program that was centered on three basic needs within the university: transition into college, work integrated learning and transition out of college. This online career development program consisted of 30 modules that were divided into six certificate programs. Each of the six programs had a specific area to focus on for each student. The six programs consisted of: university preparation, career preparation, workplace preparation, career management, graduate careers and workplace resilience. The university preparation and career preparation course played a role in helping students gain more self-efficacy on decision making whereas the other four programs focused on the work aspect and stressors of college (Thomson, 2010).

Thomson's (2010) study started as a pilot program in 2009 that lecturers were welcome to incorporate into classes, but after positive feedback from students, these modules became mandatory for several majors at the university. Lecturers could use these modules as much or as little as they wanted during classes. If lecturers did choose to incorporate these programs, students had to receive 80% on the final quiz of the program to receive credit and a certificate of completion.

As stated before, this study was originally set up as a pilot study; there were plans to add an evaluation from students, career services and lecturers if the program continued. The evaluation for the pilot study involved a short questionnaire and discussion forums to discuss thoughts or concerns. The evaluation showed students were more confident in being prepared for the university and felt the program helped them develop confidence in finding a job after college. The university staff felt the program helped keep them up-to-date with different requirements and valuable resources for students and lecturers (Thomson, 2010). The results of the pilot study show promise for involving faculty and staff at a university in using class time to focus on nurturing career development in students. The next two studies examine specific areas of society to show how different genders and degree programs play into the career development process.

Lepre (2007) conducted a study using the theory of planned behavior (TOPB). Lepre used a column in the student newspaper to implement this study and hypothesized that students exposed to positive messages would have more interest in career preparation courses. This study's sample consisted of 154 participants who did a pre-test, then a three week newspaper program, and then a post-test to follow up. Students were to read the positive message that were provided each day in the student newspaper. The newspaper program consisted of three formats that were called positive messaging. These messages were about signing up for a career

counseling workshop with positive consequences, not wasting money on the wrong major, and creating a support network (Lepre, 2007).

Measures for this study used a Likert scale, addressing student attitudes and perceived behavioral control. The study showed that exposure to positive messages did not have an effect on students' opinions about career preparation. Students' opinions stayed about the same and they did not feel the need to sign up for career counseling workshops (Lepre, 2007).

After reviewing this study, some shortcomings are obvious. First, there is no proof that the students actually read the newspaper columns for all three weeks, or at all. In addition, it is difficult to say whether the written messages are reliably positive. Everyone's opinions about things are different, so there could possibly be an instrumentation error in this research.

A study done by Cassie and Chen (2012) takes a look into the career maturation that occurs among female and male students. Past research suggests that females and males perceive career decision making differently and females seem to mature faster than males. This study examines the impact of education interventions on a student's career maturity based on their gender (Cassie & Chen, 2012).

The sample in this study consisted of 371 grade 10 students from eight Canadian public schools. Genders were almost equal with 56% being female students and 44% being male students. There were 200 in the treatment group and 171 students in the control group. Students in the treatment group received 55 hours of mandatory class time per half semester based on three target areas that were part of a career development program: personal knowledge and management skills, exploration of opportunities, and preparation for transitions and change (Cassie & Chen, 2012).

Students were given pre- and post-tests using the following instruments. The Self-Directed Search, the Career Decision Scale, and a self-report inventory. The Self-Directed Search inventory is based on Holland's theory of six occupational codes. Students receive a three-letter code guiding them to career options where their interests will be compatible with the interests of males and females successfully employed in the career. The Career Decision Scale consists of 17 questions and it determines students' certainty regarding their choice of major and career options. The self-report inventory, created by the researchers, consisted of questions that related to students' gender and occupational interests and measures their engagement in career-related activities and their self-efficacy for career decision-making (Cassie & Chen, 2012).

Results of this study showed that this career development program had an impact on both genders. Females seemed to have made more changes and steps into different career plans than males according to the pre- and post-test after receiving the career program. Results also showed that males who did receive the career program gained more career decision-making self-efficacy compared to the males who did not receive this program (Cassie & Chen, 2012).

This study did not separate out students with special needs, however. Students with disabilities often get overlooked when talking about career success. Briel and Getzel (2014) and Alderfer, Patterson, Repetto, Seabrooks-Blackmore, & Webb, (2014) explored the struggles students with a disability have while career planning and being successful with their disability.

According to Alderfer et.al. (2014) a transition period for young adults is needed to transition from high school to post school activities, especially for individuals with disabilities. Students with a disability are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed compared to their friends who do not have a disability. The outcomes for students with a disability have improved over the past several years but still, such young adults do not have the same quality of life as

their peers (Alderfer et. al., 2014). Research has shown that disabled individuals with at least a bachelors degree are twice as likely to be unemployed than are their peers with the same degree who do not have a disability (Briel & Getzel, 2014).

Participants in the Briel and Getzel (2014) study were individuals who were autistic according to the autism spectrum disorder scale. Eighteen individuals aged 18-24 were gathered from a local college. They ranged from freshmen to seniors in college. The grade point average for these students ranged from 2.0 to 3.76 and they were all enrolled as full-time students. Majors that individuals were pursuing included degrees in humanities, science, social work, teaching, communication, and business administration. Four were undecided (Briel & Getzel, 2014).

Instruments for this study were a two-part structured interview created by Briel and Getzel (2014). The first part gathered information about the participants' demographics: major, gender, year in school, and grade point. The second part to the interview consists of seven open-ended questions. This allowed for participants to talk more freely about their career preparation process, career planning experiences, and the support systems participants preferred. Participants received these questions before the in-person interviews to better prepare themselves for the face-to-face interview (Briel & Getzel, 2014).

Answers to the open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed based on how long the student took to respond, knowledge about a particular topic and outcomes expected regarding career related work experience. Many of the participants had a hard time describing their career planning process or how career services could improve. Several students talked highly of their interest in pursuing their future career. One common theme throughout all participants was that

they knew what they wanted to major in but had little understanding of what the work environment or job experience may be likee (Briel & Getzel, 2014).

The research done by Briel and Getzel highlights the important needs of students with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities may need more guidance in career preparation compared to their peers. Most individuals chose not to pursue help with career services, even though failing to do so can lead to unemployment. One limitation of this study could be that the individuals had the open-ended questions to review before the initial interview. There was no documentation of the participants receiving outside help by peers or family members that could have influenced the way the participant responded to each question.

Summary

As discussed throughout this chapter, career development programs have provided positive results for students. Not just students, but even some university faculty have agreed that some career guidance is needed for new college students.

Research has shown that gender does play a factor when it comes to making life and career decisions. Females seem to mature faster and have an idea of a career plan. while males seem to need to have a little more help when it comes to decision making about career plans and are less realistic about careers.

One problem that was found for new college students was the lack of self-efficacy for career decisions. Research has shown that students need direction and guidance on making a positive career decision.

The research that has been presented included evidence that intervening at an early age by talking about careers can ultimately affect young adults' career success. Programs that

involve middle school students influence them to become proactive in career education and begin to think of their future career success.

The field of career guidance is dynamic. It will continue to change. Through research we have seen the positive roles parents and professors have regarding young adults' career decisions. With the continuing exploration of successful career programs, young adults may have improved career success.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

The role of higher education has changed multiple times over the past hundred years. Most careers now require post-secondary education in specific majors to be able to apply to certain jobs. With these requirements changing students need a program or guidance to direct them in an appropriate path. With almost 70% of undergraduate students changing their major at least once it shows students need more preparation and direction on career paths.

Career inventories can be dated back to the early 1900's where they were geared only toward men. Slowly throughout the early years of career guidance, women had the option to take gender stereotype inventories that only focused on business or teaching careers. Eventually inventories were developed that allowed women to compare their interests with both male and females employed in an occupation. Now women can easily be working as engineers or mechanics. Thanks to programs encouraging study of science technology, engineering, and mathematics, women find it easier to be majoring in these formerly stereotyped majors.

The No Child Left Behind Act enacted in 2001 has caused some struggles for counselors because they lack access to students to help them with career plans. School guidance counselors are unable to work with high school seniors during class time about their future plans. Students may end up wasting thousands of dollars on a degree that they find no use out of because they did not have a proper career path planned out.

Research has shown that career programs have had positive impacts on students. Most research has shown that students lack self-efficacy for decision making regarding career plans. At the age of 18, many young adults find it hard to plan the rest of their lives let alone plan a career.

According to Caine-Bish, Chuang and Walker's (2009) research, self-efficacy regarding career was a concern. With Thomson (2010) also saying self-efficacy was a concern for students, a program needed to be developed. Thomson (2010) created modules that would help students in their decision making. The results of this study showed that with guidance on career paths, students were able to improve their self-efficacy regarding career decisions after finishing the program.

Another concern to consider when developing a career program is the student's gender. Cassie and Chen (2012) conducted research which concluded that females were more active in career planning steps than males. Results for females also showed they matured faster than males when comparing pre- and post-test scores. Males did show gains in self-efficacy when determining a future career. This shows females and males may develop at a separate rate but both genders did gain important growth throughout this career development program.

All of this research highlights one problem. Young adults struggle to make a sound career decision at a young age. We cannot expect these young adults to decide on their major and career path on their own. These young adults need direction and guidance to help make positive decisions as they plan and prepare for their future careers.

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