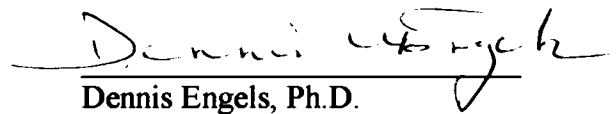


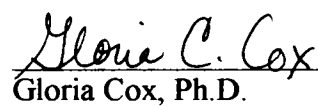
The Complexities of Career Development

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to explore the increasing role of career development services and career counselors in today's increasingly diverse and complex career environment. In addition to the review of the existing literature in this area, original interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of career counseling professionals in the Career Counseling Center at the University of North Texas. Interviews were conducted with four career development specialists as well as the director and assistant director of the center. The first major finding of the research is that the career counseling services are under-utilized by the students at UNT, which is ironic since the cost of using these services is included in student fees. Second, students tend to misunderstand the purpose of career counseling. Many believe incorrectly that the career counseling specialist will choose their careers for them, when in reality, the purpose of career counseling is to help the clients discover their career paths for themselves using the tools and resources the counseling center can provide.

Introduction

Why do we care about career development? Unless one is independently wealthy or wins the lottery, the search for a job and/or a career is a necessity for most people. For many students, young professionals, and even seasoned workers this search is difficult, confusing, and a lifelong process. The role of career counselors, coaches, and employment agencies will become more important as career opportunities expand and become increasingly diverse. In addition, the U.S. workforce itself is increasingly diverse, including women and individuals from a wide spectrum of cultures, levels of education, and talents (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). With the understanding that career development professionals are guides to the unending opportunities for employment, this paper reviews strategies and theories that career development professionals and career counselors can implement to better assess and guide their clients. I will address the issues of career services improvement and what changes we might expect in the future, as well as strategies people can use to find jobs when they do not have access to a career center.

Literature Review

Definition of Terms

In this study, the term “client” refers to anyone seeking career services, and can include people of any age and at any career stage. “Career development services” refers to services performed by career centers, career advisors, and self-assessment tools. “Career counseling/counselors” refers to mental health, emotional, and vocational counseling services provided by a licensed and/or certified counselor.

Use of Assessments

In the past, career-counseling sessions relied heavily on skills and interests assessments. Many people were frustrated with career-counseling sessions in which they simply completed

and received interpretations of standardized interest and skill assessments. Those assessments may or may not have accurately portrayed who the clients were as individuals or captured the breadth of their interests and capabilities (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001).

Assessments are not foolproof but they are often the starting point when working with a client who is trying to make decisions for the future. It is also important to realize that career development is not just about tests or quick fixes; it takes time and effort for the client to learn about themselves and their interests (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001). Career service professionals and clients should not stop after they receive the career assessment results, but use them as a starting point for further reflection, discussion, and discovery. One has the opportunity to benefit from career interest, skill, and personality assessments; however, one must realize that interests and skills do not necessarily reflect *actual* abilities (Smith & Campbell, 2003; Miller, 1999). For example, perhaps a student decides to become a doctor because she loves helping people; however, she cannot endure the sight of blood and has failed biology and anatomy. Despite the student's interests, her abilities reflect a need to pursue a different profession. The abundance and variety of career choices can lead individuals into a state of confusion, frustration, and "career indecision" (Osipow, 1999, p. 147). These clients may not know where to begin. It is important to note that career assessments can also be a helpful way to narrow down possibilities for an individual who is choosing among several career options.

Many populations do not have career development services readily available. If one does not have access to career assessments, reflecting on one's hobbies and natural inclinations can be a beneficial area to begin brainstorming ideas (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001). For instance, if a client loved making pottery—loved working with her hands, working independently and then sharing her work, creating new ideas and implementing them—perhaps she could open up a shop in a

large city, work as a florist, or become an instructor for a senior art class at the community center, and so on. One often hears that there is a time for work and a time for play (i.e., hobbies). However, they do not have to be distinct and mutually exclusive from one another; weaving one's avocation into one's career can create a compatible, interesting, and fulfilling combination for some.

Benefits of Counseling Sessions

In addition to administering standardized assessments, it can benefit the client to meet with a counselor for individual counseling, group counseling, or a combination of the two. Opportunities to converse with the client can clarify information gathered from the standardized assessments. The client's background and family tend to have a tremendous influence on client understanding of appropriate careers, although many clients may not be aware of this influence on their career development (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001). It is imperative that the counselor not make premature assumptions about the client based solely on the assessments and/or related client data because this might result in a missed opportunity for the client to expand and elaborate on his or her career interests and aspirations.

During these counseling sessions, counselors can have the client develop a "dream job scenario [which] has client[s] go back into their past and write out, or share aloud, three jobs they previously were interested in but gave up pursuing due to financial barriers, practicality, educational limits or for other reasons" (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001, p. 93). The counselor can listen to these descriptions and help the client glean similarities in each in order to form a picture of aspects of a career the individual would enjoy or appreciate. Clients and counselors can use these dream job depictions as a guide. The client can perhaps build from them or even build up to them. The counselor can also have the client gather in-depth research about these jobs. This

process can be an effective way for clients to explore the many responsibilities or stipulations of various careers that they may or may not enjoy, as well as misconceptions that they might hold about jobs they desire (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001). Dream job scenarios can be helpful in terms of promoting client awareness of what duties, work schedules, and so on one could enjoy, but students should understand that the term “career” is not referring to one specific job but rather a lifetime of various job roles, learning, and growth opportunities (Goodman, 2006).

It is not enough to ask a person a few questions about his or her interests in life and hope to steer the person into a complimentary field. It is essential to realize that “not only are our careers central to one’s identity, but they affect and are affected by, all of the other areas of our lives” (Goodman, 2006, p. 69). Thus, it is very beneficial for career development professionals to have not only an awareness of current available career and economic opportunities, but also a background in interpersonal communication and individual counseling.

Career services professionals can be a key for individuals to find career fields that are meaningful, fulfilling, and in keeping with how they would enjoy spending a large portion of their day. Counselors must understand that clients are coming from a variety of backgrounds and influences and, consequently, will have very different views about work and even about the very career services they seek. Counselors must be willing and able to listen actively to what their clients are saying and sense what they are not saying. Counselors should also be aware that many clients do not believe that they have the necessary skills, aptitude, and/or abilities to enter or succeed in a certain profession. Counselors can assist individuals in finding ways to increase their skill and knowledge levels as well as provide encouragement for the client to work toward their aspirations (Goodman, 2006).

Career Concepts in the Schools

It is critical that children and young adults, perhaps even beginning at the elementary age, are exposed to career-related discussions and opportunities. The more an individual is familiar with brainstorming and considering career options, the easier it should be for him or her to express talents, interests, and skills when trying to decide on a career path. Many children are exposed to only a small fraction of available careers, usually those that they see repeatedly on television and the media, and those positions held by parents and family members. This minimal exposure can limit the children's awareness of opportunities and does not expose them to the thousands of specialties and intricacies of various careers needed in a global economy. Therefore, it is extremely beneficial to bring career development awareness into the schools at an early age and help students expand their career horizons by exposing them to a wide array of career opportunities.

Literature Review Conclusions

Future research and publications are needed to broaden the awareness of career and employment counseling, and to provide research-based evidence for more effective avenues for finding employment. For career development, one of the main sources of information and guidance for college students is their campus career center, which is why this study focused on the Career Center at the University of North Texas. To illustrate that an individual's career development is a lifelong process, this paper provides a case study on the Career Center of the University of North Texas and the roles it plays within the career development of students and alumni.

Methodology

Description of Research Participants

Participants were selected from within the University of North Texas community. The first group (Group 1) consisted of career development specialists/facilitators who have a business/industry background, not necessarily a counseling-oriented experience and expertise. The second group (Group 2) consisted of career center directors and assistant directors.

Research Sample Size and Duration of Interviews

Group 1 included four career development specialists who were each interviewed for approximately 40 minutes. Group 2 included two directors/assistant directors with each being interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Total interviewing time was approximately 290 minutes (approximately 4 hours).

Protection of Participants

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Texas approved this study on February 27, 2006. Each participant signed a consent form prescribed by the IRB (see Appendix A). One copy was maintained for research records, and a second copy was given to the participant for his or her records. An explanation of the goal and purpose of the study was included in the consent form. Participants were told at the beginning of the interview that participation was voluntary, that they had the option to not answer any questions to which they objected, and that they could terminate the interview at any time should they feel inclined to do so.

Questions for Each Group

Each group was asked a set of six to nine questions, respectively, in their interviews. If the participant consents, the interview was recorded on an audio tape recorder for further review by the researcher. The following questions were asked of Group 1, the Career Center personnel:

1. Do you believe career development services can be effective for everyone?
2. What goals do you have for a career development session?
3. What advice do you have for students and other seekers of career development and career satisfaction?
4. What do you enjoy most about the career development work you do?
5. Where is the future of career services headed?
6. What suggestions do you have for people seeking jobs that do not have access to or are not aware of career centers and services?

The following questions were asked of Group 2, the Assistant Directors/Directors:

1. Do you think students efficiently utilize the career services available to them?
2. How do you differentiate career counselors and career center personnel?
3. What do you view as important to the future of your field and/or student career centers?
4. What career path have you taken to bring you to your current position?
5. What are your expectations of the career center personnel when they are interacting with clients?
6. What recent developments and changes have you seen in the field?
7. What future trends do you see in career services in colleges and universities specifically?
8. How has the Internet affected the field of career services?
9. What suggestions do you have for people seeking jobs who do not have access to or are not aware of career centers and services?

Selection of Participants

The participants were recruited through advertisements given to Career Center employees. The participants were selected from the volunteers willing to participate in the study. The participants included: Dan Naegeli, Director, and Dee Wilson, Associate Director (Group 2 participants); April Kuykendall, Career Development Specialist; Mary Kathleen Baldwin, Graduate Assistant; Rachel Smith, Student Employment Coordinator; and Glenn Jensen, Career Development Specialist (Group 1 participants). Interviews were conducted throughout April and the beginning of May 2006.

Presentation of Findings

Client Utilization of Career Services

Unfortunately, many students do not take advantage of the services that are available to them. Wilson mentioned that it is a challenge to spread the word to all of the students on a large campus. As a team, the career center staff is constantly aware of and thinking about how they can help the student body—the people whom they are here to serve. A unique challenge for student development and service programs is the mindset of the current generation, generation X, and more recently, generation Y. Wilson asserts that the current generations have a tendency to appreciate being sought out. They have an inclination to wait to be pursued rather than seeking out services. It seems reasonable to assume that part of the problem with student indecision and confusion is that students do not utilize the available resources.

A particular problem is that, on the continuum of students, it tends to be students at the two extremes who visit the career center. As Dan Naegeli, Director of the UNT Career Center, mentioned, on the one hand, students who are “completely confused, [and] bewildered as to what they are supposed to do” visit the center, as well as those who are “very focused, very knowledgeable and just need some additional support” concerning their opportunities and future career path. Very rarely does the middle group utilize the services. Another problem in terms of student utilization is their perception of what the career center actually does. One misconception is that career centers only offer placement services to graduating seniors. Naegeli asserts, “Any good career center should be there for more than just helping students find jobs. It’s [about] helping them figure out what they want to do with their life and mapping out a plan on how to get to that point.” Students can visit the UNT Career Center starting the first semester of their

freshman year all the way through graduation and beyond. Naegeli also emphasized that many students place too much importance and pressure on their first job after graduation instead of viewing their first job as the first step in their lifetime career development path. This sentiment is echoed by Jane Goodman of Oakland University, who said, “[a]lthough the goal may be to identify an occupation or field of study, it is important to remember that this is usually one in a series, not the occupation, nor even the last education and training that will be needed” (Goodman, p. 72). Furthermore, the Career Center can even help students *after* they graduate. A reported 25% of the advisors’ appointments are with alumni who are interested in switching jobs or even entering different fields (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006).

The people working at the UNT Career Center have a ‘can-do’ attitude, and Baldwin is not an exception. She also believes that career services can be effective for everyone. Career development is extremely important because one’s employment is not just your job but rather something that ‘has an effect on a number of areas on a person’s life (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25, 2006). Career development is not a disconnected part of your life, but an integrated aspect of it. Career services will look different for everyone—some need help finding a part-time job, while some want to learn about strategies for their job search as they near graduation.

Kuykendall makes an interesting distinction. She said career services can be effective “if utilized correctly.” Career centers cannot force students to work through the self-discovery process, to follow up on research, to write thank-you letters after their interviews, and learn how to negotiate their salary. However, if students want to learn, the career advisors are ready and willing to guide them.

One important aspect of career search strategies is creating an effective résumé. It is important to “tailor... a résumé to be able to highlight the experiences that they’ve had in the past, but also restructure them and highlight them differently for any future jobs that they might like to hold” (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25, 2006). Jensen also recommends that students start their résumé early, and continue to improve it along the way. His advice is to “write a résumé your freshman year. Make it a living document that you polish for the next four years. That way you can keep up with your achievements on campus, your leadership on campus, job changes, projects, [and] relevant coursework... Keep that going all the way through your education... [and remember] the sooner you start the easier it is” (G. Jensen, personal communication, May 17, 2006) so that one does not have to rush to put together a résumé the senior year.

Differentiating Between Career Counselors and Career Advisors

There are many terms and titles used to describe the professionals in the career development field. An important distinction is the title of “career counselor” and “career advisor.” Although these terms are occasionally used as though they are interchangeable, they are not. The word ‘counselor’ is referring to individuals with counseling degrees, licenses, and counseling credentials. In the UNT Career Center, the personnel working with the students are career advisors who provide guidance and practical tools to jobseekers. As Wilson describes, the career advisors focus on sharing advice, how to get the résumé together, preparing for interviews, job search strategies, what employers are looking for, growth areas, salary information, and “career exploration to a certain degree” (D. Wilson, personal communication, April 7, 2006).

The difference can be summarized as a comparison of “surface versus depth” (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006). Career centers are usually focused on advising. When students are not sure what they need to do and are wondering what to do next, the career center is an excellent place for them to go. First, career centers can help them sort through their ideas on choosing a major. They can teach students about interview styles and which ones are used most frequently at the time. They can advise them on how to interact initially with company contacts, how to put together résumés and cover letters. Again, the distinction between career advisors and career counselors has to do with deeper, outside forces and issues (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006). Career choices are not separate from one’s personal life (Goodman, 2006). Thus, counseling can be especially helpful if a client needs to sort through personal issues before deciding on jobs. When there are pressures (perhaps coming from the family), or mental and physical development issues that need to be addressed, a licensed counselor is the best-suited professional to handle the situation.

Creating Effective Career Development Sessions

Baldwin focuses on creating a session that is collaborative. She works to ensure that the focus is on the student and accomplishes this by first asking, “What do you hope to get from the session?” She realizes that the session must be focused on the student, and this clear sense of priority reinforces the UNT Career Center’s overall aim to help each student on an individual basis, and to find out what he or she needs. Taking the opportunity to listen to the student’s expectations seems to ensure a more effective session.

Contrary to what many students believe, career service professionals intend to empower students by giving them tools necessary to succeed in job searching, interviewing, and the like rather than merely finding them a job. Finding employment “is a job in itself people have...

[an] idea that you just go out and ... apply for these jobs and that's all there is to it; that it's not networking, it's not investigating, it's not doing research on things. There's a lot more to it than just going out and finding a job" (R. Smith, personal communication, April 21, 2006).

Baldwin uses several tools to empower students and teach them the skills necessary to achieve productive employment throughout their lives. One way she enjoys starting sessions is to ask, "What is your dream job?" It is important to note that dream jobs are rarely what college graduates obtain right after getting a degree. A dream job is:

pretty ideal and not always very realistic, but I think it gives us a starting point and can shed some light on some things that might be a little under the surface about what they really want to do with their lives. While that dream job specifically may not be an option, and may not be a possibility, we can take a look at well, why is that your dream job? Is it because you love working with people, you love working with animals, or you love this particular type of a schedule? (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25 2006)

First, few graduates know enough about what they would like to do in order to pursue a job that would match everything they enjoy. Second, although education is extremely important, so is on-the-job experience. Students may not have to start out in entry-level jobs, but they usually will need to spend some time learning about the company, the culture, and their specific roles therein. A degree is not a golden ticket redeemable for a great paycheck; rather it is a document declaring, as Smith aptly related, "I'm teachable and I'm trainable," in other words, I have the ability to learn and understand what is necessary to effectively adapt to evolving job responsibilities. Back to Baldwin's intention, as students declare what their dream job would be, they can then dissect the job in a sense and evaluate what elements of a job the student really desires. Is it the particular industry that interests them? Do they dream of the opportunity to travel constantly and meet new people everyday? Or are they planning on settling down soon and would appreciate a flexible schedule with nights and weekends to themselves? Every job has

aspects that are transferable to other jobs. Students can focus on obtaining jobs that fit the aspects that are the most important to them. An excellent resource for this type of job searching is the O*NET, “a multifaceted extraordinarily current and comprehensive World Wide Web information resource and resource link” (D. Engels, personal communication, May 2006) created and maintained by the federal government. Students can search this free Website by skill sets, job family, and so on at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>. Baldwin also asks students about the geographic locations in which they are interested as well in case there are other people (such as a spouse or child) who need consideration in terms of the decision-making process. Through acknowledging these considerations, Baldwin makes career development sessions more effective and more realistic for the students.

Kuykendall seeks to be helpful and practical with the students, noting that she wants to be able to help them gain the necessary skills and tools to succeed with their career goals both immediate and future. Each session is different depending on the student; it could involve helping them through necessary elements of a résumé or the interview, helping them sort out and discover what their skill sets are and what they should be (A. Kuykendall, personal communication, April 25, 2006). Advisors will happily practice interviewing with the students, help them reflect on their interests, areas where they are successful, and how their skills can translate into various career fields.

What Is Important to the Future of the Field and/or Student Career Centers

It is important for career centers to know what the students need. Wilson emphasizes that what students need will differ from year to year and from university to university. In particular, it will depend on the disciplines the school offers. It is important for career development professionals to know who their audience is, not only in terms of the students but also in terms of

what employers and recruiters are looking for in new employees. Career advisors must continually improve their own professional growth. Wilson suggests that advisors can accomplish this by attending conferences related to the disciplines in which the students are interested, being involved in professional organizations, networking, and continuous relationship building.

Naegeli echoes the issues relating to generational changes and their impact on career centers. A recent challenge for professionals interacting with students of the Millennium generation is the “helicopter parent.” These parents are characterized by excessive involvement in the decisions and direction that their children (now age 18 and older) make regarding their own lives. Career centers usually interact solely with the student, and the advising is not meant to include the parents. In contrast, many of these students are accustomed to having their parents literally make most of their decisions for them, or at least be involved in any major decision-making process (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006). Students of this generation face a new situation when interacting with career services. Career advisors *advise*; they do not make students’ decisions for them. Thus, many students are frustrated when advisors are giving them industry information, employers who are hiring, opportunities to go to seminars, and additional tools to make the decision, but not the decision itself. This unique dilemma has prompted career center personnel to reach out to students who are still in secondary school. While such activities and practices are routine in programs such as Upward Bound, they are relatively new for high school students in general. Career professionals can hold workshops and seminars for students in junior high and high school and possibly include their parents as well. These can be a forum to discuss ideas of autonomy for the students and also as a means to encourage thinking about different of types of future employment in which the students are

interested and for which they are qualified on finishing high school, whether they are going on to higher education or entering directly into the workforce (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006).

The focus for the UNT Career Center is on each student as an individual and on contemplating how each advisor can help students from their first year on campus for as long as the students need advising, even post-graduation. Baldwin also mentioned that career center professionals are keeping more abreast of mid-management and experienced positions in addition to entry-level jobs for new graduates due to the changing nature of lifetime career patterns, and to the increase in adult workers switching jobs and industries throughout their lives. Career development is becoming more and more complicated as students face additional opportunities and as the nature of careers change. More employees are finding themselves changing jobs and even entering different fields as opposed to the old paradigm of staying in one job, occupation, or career field for all of their work lives (D. Naegeli, personal communication, April 21, 2006).

Future Trends in Career Services in Colleges and Universities and the Impact of the Internet

Most fields are experiencing a revolution because of technological changes and continued improvements. The field of career services is no exception. Wilson said, "More and more we're going to have to look at technology" (D. Wilson, personal communication, April 7, 2006). The Internet has had a profound impact on career services in many ways. Notably, many students are relying solely on Internet Websites to conduct their job search. Wilson mentions that although there is a plethora of Websites with information, students should not "rely on just one resource" but rather to incorporate as many resources as possible. Students can use the Internet as a tool to find local career fairs and tips on interviewing and résumés, but Wilson also notes that that may

not work in every situation. For example, there are multiple styles of résumés that are appropriate, not just one that is best for every situation.

Advice for Seekers of Career Development and Career Satisfaction

Baldwin advises students to “explore what’s out there... [you can’t] get what you want until you know what you want” (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25, 2006). This advice highlights an aspect of career development that for some students is untouched, and for others is a source of frustration. If one does not know what opportunities are available, it is especially difficult to find them. Some students do not take the time to research industries and existing companies. Other students are overwhelmed with the number of existing companies and career fields. It can be exhausting to conduct in-depth research on numerous companies. Baldwin recommends speaking with someone in your field of interest. This is often referred to as an informational interview and is a great way for students and the public in general to obtain a window into the profession they are considering (Lewis & Sabedra, 2001). The career center can help a student learn how to research companies and their potential desired field and narrow their selections down. That is the essence of success in career searching, the journey from a broad understanding to a narrow focus (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25, 2006).

Suggestions for Those Who Do Not Have Access to Career Centers

Students that are graduating now and in recent years have the opportunity to utilize the Internet in their job research and job hunt. However, Mrs. Wilson of the UNT Career Center advises students to not rely solely on job Websites. Although Websites such as www.monster.com and www.careerbuilder.com serve as excellent sources of information and job opportunities, they are not to be considered exhaustive listings. Students need to network with people in their social circles and Wilson also recommends joining professional

organizations in the desired field. Students have a unique opportunity also to request informational interviews with people already working in their field. Informational interviews can provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about a field, a specific company, the company's culture, and a specific job role. Furthermore, it is important that students design their educational, extracurricular, and work experiences based not only on personal growth and interests, but also on their potential to develop themselves and their skill sets. They should continually ask themselves, "What should I be doing...to get me where I am more marketable for this career field?" Students can participate in internships, part-time jobs, leadership roles, and student organizations so that they can "have the skill sets you need for the career you are going into and hopefully even some experience before you graduate" (D. Wilson, personal communication, April 7, 2006).

Advice that is often emphasized is to be "always building up a network" (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 7, 2006). Smith agrees, "I also tell them to network. They need to ask people. I think that networking is vital and I don't think that we tap into it quite enough." In the Information Age with endless information available at one's fingertips, many students rely solely on employer-employee matching Websites. As Baldwin highlights, "There are so many jobs out there that are never posted anywhere" and many companies appreciate the opportunity to promote within a company, or receive employee referrals. Also, throughout life, clients should continually strive to learn about who they are, professionally and personally. "Understand... who you are and...research... what's out there so that you can find the best fit for yourself," Baldwin recommended (M.K. Baldwin, personal communication, April 25, 2006).

Conclusion

Major Findings

First, career development is a complex process—one that receives little attention until a student is deciding a major and/or when a person is looking for a job. This is unfortunate because ideally one should be exposed to the process of career development throughout primary and secondary school, and continuing throughout life. Career development is not about finding one perfect job, but in realizing that one's life is an interconnected path of career development formed through experiences and knowledge learned through various job-related experiences (Miller, 1999). These experiences include information absorbed from our family, friends, and social circles, from part-time jobs held as a teenager, and full-time jobs held as an adult. They include internships, volunteer experience, and hobbies.

Although the career development process can be a confusing one, there are plenty of resources available to help and guide one through this journey. Many college campuses have career centers that offer career advising and can help with résumé creation, interview preparation, and job placement. Some campuses even provide career counseling services for a more in-depth approach. Often these are already included in tuition so students need to take advantage of them. If one is not at a university, one can visit state agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission. Many resources are also available online, including the free O*Net resource system provided by the government. If one cannot access the Internet, looking through newspaper ads, visiting companies, learning more about open positions, and perhaps most importantly, networking with family, friends, and previous co-workers can be extremely helpful in learning more about potential careers.

A major problem facing providers and users of career development services is client under-usage of the available resources. A misconception clients have is that finding their career

field/job is the responsibility of the career service professional. On the contrary, the professional seeks to provide the tools, information, encouragement, and accountability necessary to aid the client in the career development process. Ultimately, the responsibility for development and career decisions rests with the client. Career advising can also be viewed as preventative medicine. People often underestimate the value of career services and there is not an abundance of funding for career programs in the schools. However, perhaps an investment in additional career advisors at the high school level as well as additional personnel for college freshmen could circumvent the dilemma faced by schools with students taking six or more years to graduate due to changing majors.

Implications for Future Studies

To round out a review of the career development process, a detailed section on career, interest, and personality assessments could be helpful. Furthermore, if the resources were available, I would have liked to interview a random mix of students, ideally those in their first semester of their freshmen year and also students in the second semester of their senior year. Furthermore, it would be helpful to interview personnel at career centers at several public and private universities of different sizes of staff to understand the goals and opportunities career centers have to offer. If time and resources were available, this study could expand to include counseling professionals who interact with clients with emotional, mental, and social issues in helping students and other clients with career decisions. Due to time and financial constraints, this study focused on the perspective of career center professionals and the unique challenges and opportunities they face at one university and so is best considered an exploratory study that can be elaborated in future research.

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Appendix A:
Participant permission forms

Informed Consent Form for Career Center Personnel

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: The Complexities of Career Development

Principal Investigator: Sarah Hermes, a student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Honors College.

Purpose of the Study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves career center personnel's opinions, advice, and experiences regarding career services. The study is focused on listening to student feedback, career center feedback, and trying to understand what is helpful for students and what could be improved so that students gain as much as possible from career services in general and at UNT.

Study Procedures:

You will be asked to meet with Sarah Hermes for an individual interview that will take approximately 40-45 minutes of your time. If you consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to be reviewed by the interviewer, Sarah Hennes. Your interview will not be recorded without your consent.

Foreseeable Risks:

A possible risk might be in the form of minimal distress over expressing one's personal or professional opinion to the researcher. If you are feeling distressed during the interview and wish to discontinue, tell the interviewer, Sarah Hennes, that you want to stop the interview.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others:

This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you; however, the collected information will be used to find common themes that career center personnel think could help improve career services sessions.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:

It is important for you to understand that in this study I am asking for your professional opinion and I may potentially use quotes or summarization of knowledge gained from your interview. I am asking your permission to use your name and information from your interview in the findings for my

undergraduate thesis. You have the right to not answer any interview question and the right to end the interview at any time, should you feel the need to do so.

If you give your permission by signature below in the appropriate section, I will audio-record your interview and maintain these tapes for the duration of the study. At the end of the study and review of research, the tapes will be disposed of. Only the research team will hear the recorded interviews.

Questions about the Study

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Sarah Hennes at telephone number (512) 736-4429 or Dr. Dennis Engels, UNT Department of Counseling at telephone number (940) 565-2918.

Review for the Protection of Participants:

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Sarah Hennes explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Permission to Record Interview:

Please sign your name and the date below in the appropriate blank if you agree to have your interview recorded; if you do not want your interview recorded, leave the blanks empty.

I do: _____ Date: _____

Give permission to Sarah Hennes to audio record my interview for the purposes of her study. I understand that I may refuse to have my interview recorded with no penalty and also that I may ask Sarah to stop recording the interview at any point during the interview session, should I choose to do so.

For the Principal Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the participant signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee

Date

Appendix B:
Interview Questions

Group 1: Career Center personnel:

- 1.) Do you believe career development services can be effective for everyone?
- 2.) What goals do you have for a career development session?
- 3.) What advice do you have for students and other seekers of career development and career satisfaction?
- 4.) What do you enjoy most about the career development work you do?
- 5.) Where is the future of career services headed?
- 6.) What suggestions do you have for people seeking jobs that do not have access to or are not aware of career centers and services?

Group 2: Assistant Director and Director:

- 1.) Do you think students efficiently utilize the career services available to them?
- 2.) How do you differentiate career counselors and career center personnel?
- 3.) What do you view as important to the future of your field and or student career centers?
- 4.) What career path have you taken to bring you to your current position?
- 5.) What are your expectations of career center personnel when they are interacting with clients?
- 6.) What recent developments and changes have you seen in the field?
- 7.) What future trends do you see in career services in colleges and universities specifically?
- 8.) How has the Internet impacted the field of career services?
- 9.) What suggestions do you have for people seeking jobs that do not have access to or are not aware of career centers and services?