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A COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO ACADEMIC ADVISING

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Cognitive-developmental models are used to analyze a case study involving the Graduate Scholarship Advisor program at Indiana University. An alternative approach to academic advising is presented.

This article examines a case study involving a sorority during its first year of participation in a Graduate Scholarship Advisor (GSA) program. The GSA program sponsors and supports a graduate student to serve as a live-in academic advisor to participating sorority or fraternity chapters. However, the GSA's areas of advising encompass a wide range of issues beyond academics. A GSA's activities may include counseling students on careers and academic major, planning programs, advising officers, and conducting workshops. The program is relatively new at Indiana University-Bloomington and consequently, there are few established guidelines for its implementation. Cognitive-developmental theory offers a framework for assessing the success of the program to date and determining an appropriate format for the future.

Research Background

In *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, Perry (1968) asserted that cognitive development consists of a continuum of four stages; dualism, multiplism, relativism and commitment. To further differentiate within the stages, the continuum is divided into nine positions. The theory provides both a helpful general model for student affairs professionals, and a foundation for the construction of detailed models designed to address specific areas of development.

Knefelkamp and Slepitz (1978) devised a model which outlined behavioral guidelines for assessing students' levels of development. They specifically addressed behaviors relating to career development of college students. The model defined nine areas of qualitative change: semantic structure, self-processing, analysis, openness to alternative perspectives, ability to assume responsibility, ability to take on new roles, locus of control, synthesis, and ability to take risks with self. The application of Knefelkamp and Slepitz's (1978) model indicated that college freshmen generally exhibit dualistic or early multiplistic behavior, while seniors exhibit early to advanced levels of multiplistic behavior.

Touchton, Wertheimer, Cornfeld, and Harrison (1979) further refined this application, incorporating the concept that a developmental environment must provide a balance of challenge and support (Sanford, 1966). The result was a curriculum of developmental instruction intended to encourage cognitive development in students. The curriculum was specifically designed for dualistic and multiplistic

students in a career planning and decision-making course. The course provided challenge through experiential learning opportunities and a diverse course content. Course structure and a personal atmosphere provided support to the students. Although Knefelkamp and Slepitzka (1978) and Touchton *et al.* (1978) addressed the area of career development, their models offer a viable approach to academic advising.

In this study, individual interviews were conducted with approximately 60% of the sorority members including sophomores, juniors, and seniors. These interviews determined individual's academic concerns and general suggestions for the chapter's scholarship program. Students were most concerned with discovering the "right" academic majors or careers. Students perceived the GSA to be an authority, able to provide either the "right" answers to their concerns, or the decision-making process to determine the "right" answers. For improving the sorority's academic performance, a majority of the students suggested strict enforcement of quiet hours, and a study table for all pledges and those actives on academic probation.

The guidelines developed by Knefelkamp and Slepitzka (1978) are useful to the GSA observing students' behaviors and assessing developmental levels. In this study, students exhibited behaviors consistent with Knefelkamp and Slepitzka's predictions for dualistic and multiplistic students. The qualitative areas of locus of control, openness to alternatives and the ability to assume responsibility were most applicable.

In terms of locus of control, dualists blame their problems on external factors beyond their control, and perceive changing those factors as the only possible solution to their problems. Solutions available to the GSA include the enforcement of study tables and quiet hours. Multiplists realize that their problems might be influenced by internal factors within their control, such as motivation or self-discipline. Locus of control is the most important qualitative factor for differentiating between the two stages (Knefelkamp & Slepitzka, 1978).

Dualistic students have difficulty considering alternatives in many situations. These students believe there is only one "right" answer to each problem, and that authorities know the "right" answers. Multiplists recognize that there may be many possible answers to a problem. Although they are more receptive to alternatives than dualists, they still believe in the idea of one "right" answer, and the authority's ability to determine that answer for them.

Although dualists suggest strict rules for improving performance, they are incapable of enforcing these rules. The failure to assume responsibility for their situations also results in dualists hesitating to approach the GSA with their concerns. Multiplists begin assuming responsibility for their actions and decisions, being more willing to solicit the advice of the GSA. However, when met with additional questions rather than answers, they are still unable to make independent decisions.

Application

As indicated earlier, Touchton *et al.* (1978) outlined an instructional model achieving a proper balance of challenge and support by combining elements of diversity, direct experience, structure, and personalism. In terms of academic advising, this model provides a framework for achieving two goals: improving

academic achievement by supporting students and addressing them at their current cognitive levels; and promoting additional cognitive development by subsequently challenging students at their current levels.

Regardless of the specific program goals, the GSA would best initiate an advising program by establishing a supportive environment. In this study, the GSA would begin by addressing the dualistic issues such as quiet hours and study tables. These issues require the GSA to assume an active role as the authority figure in supporting and implementing the students' suggestions. The approach would accomplish three goals. First, enforcing the rules may actually solve the academic problems for some students. Second, attending to specific concerns would provide support to all students by lending structure to the advising program and relieving students of the responsibility for enforcing their suggestions. Third, the approach may prompt cognitive development among students by "forcing [them] to alter the constructs that they have used to reason about certain situations" (Widick, Knefelkamp, & Parker, 1975, p. 291). More specifically, the suggested approach would provide support to such students initially, but would not ultimately produce the desired academic results. The situation challenges these dualistic students to examine themselves more closely and consider alternative causes for their poor grades. Such behavior would indicate movement toward multiplism.

After addressing the general needs of the chapter's dualistic faction, the GSA might promote multiplistic levels of development through activities designed to present a number of possible answers or approaches to students' concerns. Workshops, discussions, and support groups are techniques for addressing specific academic concerns (i.e. test anxiety, study skills, or time management) and exploring a variety of scholastic topics. Once again, the programming would accomplish many goals. Students at lower cognitive levels would respect and prefer the advice of the authority group leader over that of peers. Within the group setting, a structured format and the presence of peers provide environmental support. Finally, the activities might challenge students by demanding their active participation in exploring a variety of new ideas. As with the dualistic approach described above, multiplistic programs may foster development in multiplistic students by "creating a readiness to move" (Widick & Simpson, 1978, p. 33) to more advanced levels of cognitive development.

Cognitive-developmental models might be most beneficial to GSAs for individual advising. In this study, students experiencing the greatest academic difficulty never alerted the GSA to their situations. Soliciting the GSA's assistance was too challenging for these students. In such situations, the GSA must provide support to students through personalism and structure. The GSA would begin by initiating individual contact with poor achievers, thereby relieving the students of that responsibility. Together they might establish structure by scheduling regular meetings, setting goals, outlining student schedules, and monitoring students' progress.

Conclusion

There are limitations to applying the Knefelkamp and Slepitzka (1978) and Touchton *et al.* (1978) models to academic advising. Although Knefelkamp and Slepitzka

identified specific behaviors indicative of developmental levels, there are no standard techniques for assessing developmental levels. The methods of assessment in the present study were strictly observational, relatively informal, and based solely on the GSA's personal contact with the students.

For a cognitive-developmental approach to be implemented, additional training in student development theory would be necessary. Even then, the GSA's approaches would be based only upon the limited exposure and basic theoretical understanding acquired during a brief training period.

One possible solution would be to base group programming on the predominant developmental levels among college students. GSAs instructed in the levels of development most likely to be encountered within their chapters, could then implement specifically designed programs for the students' developmental levels. This approach reduces the need to assess each student's development when designing programming for the group.

To date, GSAs have designed advising approaches based upon intuition, personal background, and trial-and-error. The cognitive-developmental models outlined provide GSAs with a theoretical basis for understanding their population, while allowing them the freedom to define goals, and design individual approaches.

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EXAMINING WOMEN'S VIEWS ON CAREER, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: 1950-1984

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Views of professional women, currently in academic settings, are examined and compared to women in similar settings from 1950 to 1984. The paper focuses on career, marriage and family issues.

History has witnessed many role changes for women from the time when they existed solely as wives and mothers. Today, women may choose to have a career, children, and stay single. More has been accomplished in the past 30 years, with regard to women's rights, than in the preceding 200. Society may be unprepared to assimilate the progressive changes which have been occurring. Consequently, some women's rights for personal choice are being violated, not unlike those women who had been denied education or employment due solely to their gender. Equality entails the right to choose among all choices, not simply the progressive or popular choices of the period. This paper compares the views of society from 1950 through 1984 to the views of women interviewed in a study conducted by Dr. Nancy Evans of Indiana University on the development of women. Women in the study ranged from mid-twenties to post-retirement age, and were teachers or administrators at the elementary, secondary, or post-secondary level in the state of Indiana.

Prior to 1950, limited numbers of fields were available to women, most being substandard in salaries and benefits. Teaching at the elementary and secondary level was one of the most open professions for women. (Rothman, 1978). Even in this "open" profession, women were forced to make choices regarding career and family.

When I started teaching (1920s) they did not allow anyone to be married after you started teaching unless you were on tenure (5 years). So to begin with, I didn't get married until after I'd taught six years, just to be sure. There was no such thing as taking maternal leave, you resigned, and if you were not on tenure and you got married, you resigned. (Evans, 1984, No. 129)

In this case, society deemed women incapable of managing both family and teaching early in their careers. Further, women with a genuine career interest were described as both rare and maladjusted (Helson, 1972).

During the 1950s, an effort was made to accept the idea that a married woman could also work if her family came first. Following World War II, acceptance of women in the work world was inevitable after thousands of women had quite credibly engaged in what was traditionally considered man's work (Helson, 1972). In addition to the drastic impact of the war, by 1950 women were better educated,