

ACADEMIC ADVISORS AS QUESTION-SPECIALISTS: A PROBLEMATOLOGICAL  
THEORY OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

by

MICHAEL MERVA

(Under the Direction of Andrew Gitlin)

ABSTRACT

Advising literature is full of innovative advising “approaches” -- methods of structuring advising programs or individual appointments. Theories or philosophies of academic advising are less common, as advisors are more concerned with day-to-day practice. However, a foundational theory of advising is necessary in order to unify and professionalize advising. I propose that problematology, a philosophy of questioning developed by Belgian rhetorician Michel Meyer, provides a uniquely appropriate basis upon which to build a foundational theory of advising. In this dissertation I analyze current advising approaches from a problematological perspective to arrive at the most important concepts in advising. After an explanation of problematology, I then apply problematology to these advising concepts, resulting in the academic question-specialist theory of advising. This problematological theory of advising is able to encompass current practices and guide future advising approaches, but more importantly, it provides advisors with a simple way to explain our work to students and administrators across all settings of higher education.

INDEX WORDS: Academic Advising, Problematology, Philosophy of Education, Advising Approaches, Advising Assessment

ADVISORS AS QUESTION-SPECIALISTS: A PROBLEMATOLOGICAL THEORY OF  
ACADEMIC ADVISING

by

MICHAEL MERVA

BA, Western Michigan University, 2002

MA, Western Michigan University, 2005

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018

© 2018

Michael Merva

All Rights Reserved

ADVISORS AS QUESTION-SPECIALISTS: A PROBLEMATOLOGICAL THEORY OF  
ACADEMIC ADVISING

by

MICHAEL MERVA

Major Professor:	Andrew Gitlin
Committee:	Roger Hill
	Sheneka Williams

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2018

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Dr. George Merva, former professor of Agricultural Engineering at Michigan State University, who believed in the power of educational freedom and access to transform lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of my dissertation advisor, Dr. Andrew Gitlin, for never giving up on this project. I would also like to acknowledge the astute observations of my committee, as they helped push this project to the next level. Dr. Ilya Winham provided assistance with the section on personal advising mission statements, and the advisors in Franklin College's Office of Academic Advising at the University of Georgia provided constant inspiration by means of their dedication to advising. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the help of my family in understanding the time needed to complete this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND .....	1
NACADA's Concept of Academic Advising .....	5
Definitions of Academic Advising .....	14
A Brief History of Academic Advising .....	17
2 ACADEMIC ADVISING THEORY AND APPROACHES .....	25
Philosophy and Theory in Academic Advising .....	25
Theory and Approaches to Academic Advising .....	29
Approaches to Academic Advising .....	32
3 PROBLEMATOLOGY AND ACADEMIC ADVISING .....	45
Problematology .....	45
The Question-Specialist Theory of Advising .....	52
The Problematological Advisor .....	56
A Problematological Advising Approach .....	59
Assessing Problematological Advising .....	67
4 CONCLUSION .....	76
Getting Students in the Door .....	79
Getting Students out of the Door .....	80

The Question-Specialist Experience .....	82
REFERENCES .....	87

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the Spring of 2016, the Office of Academic Advising for the Franklin College at the University of Georgia (of which I am the coordinator) sent informal surveys to our students and advisors to understand how each group viewed academic advising. We were concerned that students were not viewing advisors as a resource for certain questions and challenges, and instead viewing the role of advising narrowly as professionals who only had information about which courses to take in order to progress through a specified degree program. The leadership of the office assumed that advisors saw themselves as a resource for students to engage with as they choose their academic path, as opposed to a resource that simply tells students which direction the path goes. However, we were not sure all advisors in the unit saw themselves that way. Our goal was to understand how advisors and students saw the role of advising differently, in order to identify the areas that did not align, and start a discussion about what we wanted the role of advising to be and how we could communicate that role to students.

While in many areas both students and advisors agreed on the role of the advisor, a few differences were apparent. Most strikingly, over 60% of students viewed their academic advisor as having the same role as their guidance counselor in high school (approximately 40% of advisors had this view). This corresponds with the findings of Walker et al. (2017) and Smith (2002), who found that the distinction between the two roles is not clear to students. The role of a guidance counselor, like that of an advisor, varies by high school (Coogan and DeLucia-Waack 2007). At some high schools, the guidance counselor is akin to a career counselor, helping

students pick the direction for their future. At other schools, the guidance counselor's role also encompasses that of a general counselor or "school counselor" who deals with mental health issues in students. But in many schools, guidance counselors are focused on college or career readiness and closing the achievement gap. Amatea and Clark's (2005) qualitative study of the role of school counselors, based on the perceptions of principals, identified four distinct ways counselors were viewed. In their study, the large majority of high school guidance counselors were seen as primarily giving advice on broad career pathways (technical versus four-year post-secondary education, for example) and ensuring graduation. Likewise, Hughey, Gysbers, and Starr (1993) found that the large majority (88%) of students interacted with guidance counselors in order to choose courses. For students who are or desire to be college-bound, the direction given by high school guidance counselors (often at the request of the parents and students) is that which will result in the best GPA, which will help with college acceptance (Bishop, et al. 2001). We saw that evidence in our survey results as well: while almost 80% of students felt the role of the advisor was to suggest courses they would do well in, only about half of advisors felt this was their role.

The final way we saw evidence of this split between path-explorer and direction-giver is in reference to supporting students as they made difficult decisions. While about 95% of advisors felt it was their role to support students as they made difficult decisions, only 80% of students felt this was an advisor's role<sup>1</sup>. While that student percentage is still high, the contrast between the two groups is worth noting, especially because of the unique position of college students. College is a significant time in a student's development because many decisions which previously had to have parental input are left to the student. This is not to say that parents do not

---

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Hughey (1993) found that about 65% of high school students used guidance counselors to help them make decisions (65%), and only about half had interactions characterized as "learning about themselves."

continue to have input, but rather to say that parents do not need to be involved; students are free to independently make decisions, and because of FERPA, can even block parents from being aware of these decisions. Parents obviously continue to be involved in the decisions of students, both large and small decisions, but the input is voluntary on the part of the student. Students are ultimately in charge of decisions, ranging from deciding on their major and courses, to deciding whether to spend Thursday night preparing for an exam, hanging out with friends, or going to a party.

Complicating the anxiety these students face as they make decisions independently is the idea that these decisions will impact everything about their lives. In high school, the goal is often getting into a good college. In college, the feeling is often that one course can determine whether a student makes it into medical school, becomes a doctor, is monetarily successful, can provide for a family, and therefore have a desirable life. Parents continue to be a source of advice, but are often not informed and equipped to deal with the questions students pose about which classes to take, what activities to partake in, how best to study for college courses, and what is important to a medical school's admission's panel. Advisors may not be situated to answer all of these questions, but they are definitely better situated to help students find the answers in order to make their decisions. Why don't ALL students see advisors as people who can give advice about difficult decisions? Why is it that some students avoid seeing advisors altogether, simply because they do not understand enough about the advising process to feel confident in making an appointment (Walker et al., 2017)? The word "advice" is in our job title, yet that message is somehow not understood by all students.

This informal survey was not intended to form the basis for a quantitative study of advisor perception, but instead is related here anecdotally to give an example of something

advisors intuitively suspect is true; namely, that students do not understand the role of an advisor. In order to understand that question though, advisors have to understand their own roles in a similar way. We were interested in investigating two questions: 1) How do different advisors perceive the role of an advisor, and 2) How do advisors and students perceptions of advising differ? In reference to the first question, it appeared that most advisors understand the role of advising in a similar way. But in reference to the second question, many students do not seem to understand our role in the same way we do.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has worked closely with the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) to develop standards and guidelines for advising. According to CAS (2005), the mission of academic advising programs should be to "...assist students as they define, plan, and achieve their educational goals" (5). Another way of saying this, as the job title suggests, is that our mission is to provide academic-related advice that can inform student decision-making. Do students understand our role this way? Most literature addressing student perceptions of advising is positive rather than normative, meaning students are asked about their perception of their own advising experience, not their perception of what an advisor is or should do (Lynch, 2004; Bitz, 2010). Alternately, other literature discusses what students *want* in advising (Mottarell, et al, 2004; Smith, 2002), which while helpful, again does not necessarily tell readers how these students understand the role of advising in an abstract sense. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2017) addresses some aspects of students' perceptions of advising, and supports the idea that students primarily look to advisors for guidance about academic plans, although not nearly as universally as advisors would hope. 44% of first-year students saw their advisor as the primary source of advice regarding academic plans; this was more than any other source of advice, but also means less

than half of first-year students understand this very basic role of advising. Surprisingly, the numbers were even lower for seniors (40%), implying that the role of the advisor gets more confusing and/or less important as one's time in college goes on.

If students, advisors, and administrators in higher education cannot get on the same page regarding what advising is, then the effectiveness of advising is bound to suffer. For students and administrators, an explanation of the role of advisors (or perhaps the definition of advising) needs to be easily understood; advisors, on the other hand, simply need a guiding set of principles so as to understand their own jobs in the same way students understand them. If we seek to be viewed as professional academics, it would be helpful if this understanding was grounded in academic theory. For both students *and* advisors, any explanation of the role of advising must be broad enough to apply to a variety of higher education institutions, and dynamic enough to stay relevant as the landscape of higher education changes. In this paper, I propose Michel Myer's theory of problematology can provide a foundation for an explanation of advising which lives up to these demands.

### **NACADA's Concept of Academic Advising**

Looking at NACADA's statements about advising is likely the best way to understand the current state of the profession, at least from those who are part of it. NACADA has spent decades advocating for the idea that advising is teaching, based theoretically in Oetting's (1967) theory of personal development, originally translated into the advising realm by Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972). While it has always been clear that advisors (ought to) view themselves as teachers, it has been less clear exactly what advising is supposed to teach.

In 2005, NACADA's president charged a task force to formulate a statement about academic advising. This "statement" ended up being the lengthy "Concept of Academic

Advising,” which developed seemingly to provide more detail than a few sentences or paragraphs could provide. The Concept of Academic Advising (finalized in 2006), along with the Core Values of Academic Advising (2017), Core Competencies of Academic Advising (2017), and the CAS Standards for Academic Advising (2014), make up the four pillar documents that describe the profession of academic advising. For advisors, these form a comprehensive description of what advisors should do, believe, and know. The pillar documents are largely practice-based, and shy away from an overall foundational statement regarding an overarching theory of advising. Instead, they reinforce NACADA’s allegiance to refusing to recognize one theory. For instance, according to the core competencies, advisors are to understand “...the history and role of academic advising in higher education...” without addressing how much the role varies depending on institution and time period; advisors are to understand “...theory relevant to academic advising...” and “...expected outcomes of academic advising...” without detailing what theories or outcomes are to be focused on. These four pillar documents suggest that each institution (that takes advising seriously) should develop the content of advising individually. The pillars provide an empty framework, leaving the foundational content of advising more or less undefined.

The most likely place to find a foundational statement about advising would be in the Concept of Academic Advising statement, since the other documents reference it as foundational for understanding what to believe and know. Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Learning Outcomes form the three foundational areas in the Concept, with “advising is teaching” remaining the backdrop upon which these areas are super-imposed.

## Curriculum

In reference to the curriculum – *what* advising is teaching – NACADA (2006) includes (but does not limit advisors to):

“...the institution’s mission, culture and expectations; the meaning, value, and interrelationship of the institution’s curriculum and co-curriculum; modes of thinking, learning, and decision-making; the selection of academic programs and courses; the development of life and career goals; campus/community resources, policies, and procedures; and the transferability of skills and knowledge.”

Two main problems arise from this definition: 1) Is there a difference between “informing” and “teaching” and 2) should the teaching of all of these areas really fall to advisors?

The first question rests on an understanding of the definition of teaching, and how (or if) it differs from simply providing a person with an understanding of policies, rules, and procedures. Definitions of teaching are wide-ranging. Some scholars (Green, 1971; Hirst, 1971) define teaching primarily by the actions and intentions of the teacher, with less emphasis on the student; others (Gage, 1963; Amidon 1967) believe there can be no teaching without an interdependent relationship between student and teachers; still others (Smith 1961) define teaching primarily in terms of any kind of system which produces learning. Schofield (1972) outlines at least four levels of teaching, ranging from conditioning to indoctrination. Providing policy and resource information might fall under “instruction” while getting students to follow certain procedures might fall under “training” or “conditioning.” Convincing students to appreciate the institution’s mission or curriculum, on the other hand, would fall under “indoctrination” – an unfortunate term but accurate term Schofield uses to refer to teaching that affects beliefs and ideas. NACADA does not address which definition or level of teaching they

subscribe to, instead leaving the term open for interpretation and adaptation as specific institutions see fit.

This lack of specificity can be problematic. For instance, Barr and Tagg (2012) argue that a focus on “teaching” means a focus on informing. Their description of the teaching paradigm in higher education infers that teaching is simply providing a person with information. In the case of advisors then, teaching really would mean simply telling students about academic programs or policies, in the same way a customer service representative informs callers about special deals or company regulations, a financial aid representative explains government loan policies, and a DMV employee tells prospective license-renewers that they do not have the correct identification. According to Barr and Tagg, under a teaching paradigm, teachers are not necessarily responsible for the receiver learning (understanding) the information; instead, that responsibility is the student’s.

However, NACADA’s goal is specifically *not* to lump advisors in with the clerical staff of a university, or even worse any kind of customer service representative of a corporation. What NACADA seems to actually advocate for is learning, and this is reflected clearly in the Concept as well as their assessment methods (which focus squarely on learning objectives), if not in their slogan. The goal of an advisor is to help students work at the higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy; advisors want students to *understand* information, absorb it and make sense of it on their own, and integrate it into their existing knowledge in hopes of synthesizing it so as to act appropriately. That is, the goal is to aid in students’ decision-making when it comes to academics: it is not only hearing what the curriculum is, but understanding the meaning, value, and interrelationship of the curriculum and co-curriculum so as to make academic decisions. Cynically, in Schofield’s terms, it is to indoctrinate them into academic thinking. It is not simply

telling students about the variety of academic programs and courses, it is teaching the selection of programs and courses. Advisors teach (or inform), but the goal is that students learn, and part of demonstrating that learning is being able to make decisions based on the information.

However, and this invokes the second question, are advisors charged with justifying and explaining *all* information they provide, so students understand it at a deeper level and can integrate it into their own decision-making? If part of the curriculum includes “campus/community resources, policies, and procedures,” ought advisors not only know about these resources, policies, and procedures, but also be able to explain the history and justification for the policies and procedures, as well as how each resource can aid a student and which one may be the most appropriate? Is the role of an advisor to provide a student with a deep understanding of “modes of thinking, learning, and decision-making” and “the transferability of skills and knowledge”? Are advisors to be tasked with teaching students how to develop life and career goals?

The issue here is not whether advisors do these things or do not, it is whether the *role* of an advisor is necessarily to do these things. Another way of saying this is, what are students supposed to learn from advisors? NACADA (2017) and CAS (2015) encourage advisors to teach policies and procedures, but go no further in explaining to what degree. Anecdotally, students who are frustrated often appreciate explanations of policies and procedures, but no academic literature exists on the subject. Advising scholars who subscribe to a learning-centered theory of advising encourage advisors to teach students to build their own curricula (Guertin, 2015), and to aid students in understanding “the transferability of skills and knowledge” from one class to another, and the academic world to the non-academic world (Darling, 2015). Kirk-Kuwaye and Sano-Franchini (2015) even imply that advisors can teach students to find spiritual, personal

meaning by explaining the purpose of the general education curriculum. However, Lowenstien (2015) admits that such tasks as described above would require advisors to teach these things in a credit-bearing class. Under the current model, where advisors meet with students only a couple of times a semester (if that), it seems highly unlikely we could accomplish deep teaching as described above. On the other hand, if the advisor's role is simply to provide information about degree programs, resources, policies, and the curriculum at a point where a student asks these questions, then the advising role seems much more feasible. However, it also seems clerical and unskilled, lacking in the criteria which would advance advising to the next level of professionalism (Habley, 2009; Shaffer, et al, 2010). Considering the variety of institutions, it makes sense that NACADA has left the specific content of the advising curriculum up to each institution; however, this results in confusion for students who have to decide between a variety of institutions, and may attend more than one institution in order to get their degree.

### **Pedagogy**

Pedagogy refers to *how* advisors are to teach the curriculum. While an integral part of the concept of academic advising, the specific pedagogical practice is left to the individual advisor. This section does not so much indicate *how* an advisor should advise, but instead simply that an advisor should think about how s/he is advising. Included in the pedagogy section is a statement regarding how advisors and students should interact (irrespective of the teaching strategy): “..the relationship between advisors and students is fundamental and is characterized by mutual respect, trust, and ethical behavior.” Obviously not every interaction will fit this mold, as advisors have no control over whether students respect or trust them, or treat them ethically. But more importantly there is an ethical dilemma at the heart of advising, one that NACADA engages with tentatively but which unfortunately lies at the heart of the advising interaction for

college administrators: Should students complete college in four years, if at all? I will return to this question later in the dissertation, as it is too lengthy to unpack here, aside from noting that bringing ethical considerations into advising without explicitly stating the purpose of advising, grounded in a philosophy and theory which provides ethical imperatives, seems suspect.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

The third pillar in the concept is Student Learning Outcomes. As with an advising pedagogy, NACADA does not insist on specific learning outcomes, but instead insists that each institution clearly identifies what these outcomes are. This section of the concept is squarely based in the “curriculum” pillar of the concept (which could/should easily be called “learning objectives”), and therefore exists (seemingly) to reinforce the framework outlined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, which encourages higher education institutions to have a mission statement, learning goals or objectives based in this statement, student learning outcomes based in the objectives, and an assessment process to judge the effectiveness the practices of the institution. Again though, the content is left to the specific institution, meaning this section draws us no closer to figuring out exactly what the content of advising – what advising is teaching – should be.

Their goal for the Concept of Academic Advising seems squarely aimed at advisors, not students: “[The concept] can be used for a variety of purposes including professional development of academic advisors and program assessment...implementing a new advising program or revising a current one” (NACADA 2006). The concept is not meant to help students understand what advising is, but instead to give advisors a suggested structure for their jobs. The concept seems to be normative as well, describing the ideal situation under which an advisor advises. What the concept does not do, however, is explain in any sort of clear language what the

content of advising ought to be. This is left up to the individual institutions to develop. While good in a practical sense, as it allows for flexibility, this lack of clear direction for advisors means that each institution is defining the work of an advisor differently. Advisors at these institutions all may share a common framework, but this framework is not helpful in providing students with an understanding of what an advisor does. It makes sense for an organization like the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Education to provide a generic framework to guide institutions and groups, as CAS is not purported to be a professional organization for a *specific* profession. NACADA is described as a professional organization for academic advisors, and owes it to the profession to take a stronger stance on the purpose and basis of academic advising, as opposed to only providing a framework for how the job should be done.

NACADA's Statement of Core Values seems like a good place to start, but the values espoused in this document again ignore the content of advising in deference to how an advisor should behave. The core values for advising, according to NACADA, are: Caring, Commitment, Empowerment, Inclusivity, Integrity, Professionalism, and Respect. While it is certainly helpful to know that advisors should be caring, committed, and inclusive (for instance), without a foundational purpose to advising, these values easily come into conflict with each other, with nothing to guide the resolution except the advisor's (or institution's) belief about what advising is. Let us look at the clearest example of how these values may conflict:

A Computer Science major, who has been struggling in his coursework, comes into an advisor's office looking forlorn. He should be graduating in the next semester or two, but his GPA may or may not allow him to. He has worked for an IT company for the past two years and has a job offer on the table. He expresses the difficulty he is having getting motivated in the courses unrelated to Computer Science, as well as the time-constraints that prevent him from

completing his projects for his CS courses. According to the core values of advising, how should the advisor respond? It is easy to say an advisor should be caring and respect the student in such a situation, but what about empowerment and integrity? Should the student, who comes from a long line of college graduates, be empowered to reject that family history and forge out on his own without a college degree, considering that the lack of degree very likely may not hold him back in his chosen profession? Should the advisor be honest about the fact that he is likely to succeed just fine without his degree? Would that conflict with the advisors allegiance to the institution's objective for all students to graduate, ideally in four years? In short, does the advisor present a real-world, honest explanation of what will likely happen to the student if he or she doesn't graduate, or is the advisor bound to convince the student graduating is in his or her best interests (even if the advisor does not believe this)? And what's more, what if this student is a History major with a side interest in computers and programming? What guiding, foundational principle is helping the advisor decide how to help this student?

A foundational core for academic advising has eluded the profession since the role of academic advisor was first identified. Advisors in specific institutions do not suffer from this lack as acutely as students do, because the advisors are solidly situated in their own units' context. Students on the other hand, especially in a nation-wide context, suffer more greatly because they have no way of knowing what an academic advisor's role is going to be at the institution they are planning on attending. Furthermore, college administrators, who have their eyes primarily on peer and aspirational institutions, also lack the universal context helpful in determining how advising should function. If NACADA and the advising community can rally around a philosophical and theoretical foundation to advising, specifically to address the ethical challenges to advisors as they make decisions about advising and help students make decisions

about their futures, both students and administrators would have a better sense of why advisors are important and how they can aid in the goals set by these groups.

### **Definitions of Academic Advising**

If a student searches for a definition of academic advising (on the NACADA website or in a general Google search), they are not immediately directed to NACADA's concept. Instead, they are provided with a number of briefer definitions on NACADA's website

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Definitions-of-academic-advising.aspx>):

1. An institutional representative giving insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach.
2. A process in which advisor and advisee enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the student's concerns. Ideally, the advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student's self-awareness and fulfillment.
3. Developmental counseling or advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills.
4. Academic advising is a process of information exchange that empowers students to realize their maximum educational potential. The advising process is student-centered and will result in the student gaining a clearer understanding of himself/herself, and the experience of higher education.

While NACADA's "Concept of Academic Advising" is important, focusing on these definitions is more important in order to understand how students view advising, as they are the definitions students would be more likely to find. Setting aside the professional context for a moment, how might a curious student seeking to understand advising arrive at a conclusion? Reading the many definitions from NACADA and synthesizing them may their first step. What might they discover?

The only repeated words in these definitions are advising, student, process, academic, direction, personal, and advisor. Assuming we cannot define something using the word we are trying to define, we can take out advising, advisor, and (possibly?) academic, leaving student, process, direction, and personal. Students may deduce then, that advising involves a personal, dynamic (evolving) interaction with students. This is a start, but it tells us only that advisors work with students in some close way, and the way they work is not static. But what exactly IS the work? This is what students need to know. There are no other repeated words in those definitions, but what themes emerge?

First, what *actions* describe the advising interaction? Here we see terms as diverse as facilitating, inform(ing), enhancing, problem-solving, giving, gaining, understanding, guiding, teaching, evaluating, educational, and mentoring. While these all follow a pattern, there is a range of how “equal” the process is between advisor and student. At one end, an advisor “informs” the student, which implies little input on the student’s side. At the other end, an advisor “serves,” implying that the advisor is at the service of the student. Between these two extremes, there are the grey areas where the give-and-take between student and advisor varies. A student reading these definitions would be unclear as to the extent to which they should involve their advisor in their decision-making. Furthermore, an advisor would be unclear as to their duty to the student: should they be checking email at home and answering immediately? Should they bend over backwards to fit yet another student appointment in? Are they bound to give students a specific answer regarding an important decision?

Next, we can turn to the *nature* of the interaction. Here, we find words like respectful, empower(ing), concerned, social, insight(ful), developmental, rational, and partnership. Again, there is a range here, from the detached (respectful, rational, social) to the close (concerned,

partnership), with terms like “empowering” and “developmental” reinforcing the dynamic aspect of interacting with a student, as well as reinforcing NACADA’s core values. The words have a lot of similarities, but we do not gain much toward the definition other than knowing that the student and advisor interact in a hopefully “positive” way (which still leaves the advisor to determine what is going to be the most “positive” way).

So far we can conclude that an academic advisor interacts with a student in a dynamic and “positive” way. Perhaps the reader has noticed that this is essentially what we learned from the four repeated words, with the simple addition that the interaction should in some sense be positive (which certainly can be viewed differently by advisors and students). What about the *content* of that interaction? Under the content heading, we find words like skills, self-awareness, concerns, information, result, vocational, and insight. Aside from “vocational,” these words are abstract, describing more about the goals of advising (self-awareness, information, insight, skills) than the content of the advisor-student interaction. The remaining words-- college, institutional, higher education-- simply refer to where the job takes place. Ironically, these are probably the most concrete words in the definitions.

From this parsing, we can determine that advisors enter into dynamic interactions with students at some level of higher education, hoping to achieve positive higher-level mental outcomes, possibly (but not necessarily?) related in some way to academics and/or vocations. This abstract sentence does in fact describe most of the interactions advisors have. But could it not also describe many other positions at an institution of higher education? Does it not describe what professors teaching classes or mentoring students do? Could it not also apply to tutors or other positions in centers of academic enhancement? Is it not also what good career center employees do? What separates *advisors* from these other positions in higher education if not the

*content* of the interaction (as opposed to the *nature* of the interaction, which seems to be the focus of many of these definitions)? Yet, as these definitions show, those working towards the development and enhancement of the academic advising profession shy away from speaking specifically about the content of academic advising. Even the most obvious content, telling students which courses to take for their degree programs, is not mentioned in these definitions. (In the informal survey mentioned above, this was the main role students and advisors overwhelming agreed upon.)

Numerous ways of defining and explaining this role have emerged since Crookston's original article on developmental advising, and new scholarship is being produced exponentially. While advising scholarship is healthier than it has ever been, it is worth asking whether the explanations of advising that have been advanced 1) are easily understood by students, advisors, and administrators, 2) can actually guide the decision-making of advisors on a day-to-day basis, and 3) are dynamic enough to persist into the future of the ever-changing landscape of higher education. If advisors, students, and administrators do not agree about what advisors do, and advisors sometimes do not even know what they are supposed to be doing, all the scholarship and academic respect in the world will not help advisors better serve their students. Furthermore, if the way advising is defined is not dynamic enough to adjust to the changing needs and settings of higher education, it will not matter whether students understand it or not.

### **A Brief History of Advising**

Looking at the history of a profession is often a good way to make sense of the current state of that profession. Analyzing the history of advising allows us to explore the way outside forces shaped the needs of students, and therefore the response of institutions. The NACADA Clearinghouse article on the history of academic advising is a curious work that primarily serves

to highlight the confusing nature of academic advising. Gillispie's (2003) short article traces advising from its origin in the English model of mentorship, prevalent at Cambridge and Oxford, all the way through the many changes advising has undergone in the past fifty years, since it became a role delegated to professional advisors instead of professors.

Gillispie outlines the development of advising by explaining it as an outgrowth of the close professor/student relationships that occurred at European universities. These relationships became strained as universities grew, professors had to take on other responsibilities, and the curriculum expanded and became more complicated. Originally, the university setting was not the place to make a decision about what profession a student would choose. The idea that student development had a place in the university was not considered, as the homogeneous quality of the student population meant that students were at the university to get an education that would prepare them for only a few specific jobs in the upper echelon of society. These few jobs were generally understood by the faculty, and therefore discussing them was something faculty felt qualified to do.

As the population attending college expanded, so did the career opportunities afforded by a college education, and the idea that students needed some type of specialized career counseling. While this role continued to be foisted upon faculty members in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the increase in possible professions encouraged the development of a theory of career counseling. In setting up the role of an advisor historically, Gillispie quotes the founder of career counseling, Frank Parsons. Parsons felt that in order to identify a route to take in college, in hopes of being guided towards a profession, one needed to be guided through three imperatives: "First a clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources, limitations, and other qualities, second, a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of different professions,

and thirdly, the opportunities and advantages of each field” (qtd in Zunker, 2002). Gillispie notes that the third point is the one most influential for the professionalization of advising, in the sense that it combines the first two imperatives. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this need for advising to encompass career counseling propelled the role to be identified more clearly and advanced as a very separate task from teaching and research. Interestingly, it is the first two imperatives that are far more relevant to the day-to-day interactions of advisors and students today, and align more closely with most of the definitions quoted at the beginning of this article. Therein lies an interesting twist, whereby one of the major events in advising history (at least as identified by Gillispie) involves a task unrelated to the curriculum of the university. While some advisors would agree that their role is to help students understand “the opportunities and advantages” of different professions, a majority of advisors may see that as the role of career consultant on campus, who may or may not have any understanding of the curriculum involved in different majors.

By stressing the third imperative, Gillispie seems to imply that advising was more akin to career counseling. Indeed, he goes on to talk about the growth of industrial psychology, skills assessments, and other forms of “placement” developed during the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gillispie points to these movements as influencing universities to open vocational guidance centers, that “...utilized occupational aptitude assessments as a tool for advising students in their academic pursuits” (2003). What is confusing, however, is whether these centers would be considered places where “academic advising” took place, or places where career advising took place. Clearly these two roles seem entangled in Gillispie’s history, to the point where it becomes unclear whether he is writing a history of career counseling or a history of academic advising. His brief sketch is instructive because of its focus, or rather lack thereof; it highlights

the fact that throughout its history, academic advising has been a catch-all term at various times used for anything related to student academic services and student development.

Sandra Cook's timeline of academic advising begins with a two sentence description of what advising was like in the 17th and 18th century university system: "The president of the college, and later the faculty, were responsible for advising students regarding their extracurricular activities, their moral life, and intellectual habits. They acted *in loco parentis*" (Cook 1999). I note this because of the specific inclusion of the term "*in loco parentis*." The idea that advisors act in place of the parents is intriguing, and worth a short digression. Many current theories of advising originate from student development theory, which boils down to a description of how students *separate* themselves from their influences in order to develop self-efficacy and become "their own person." The primary goal of advisors, if we are to believe the developmental advising model put forth by Crookston and O'Banian, is to aid in this development, and advisors spend a good deal of time helping students understand that simply because their parents are lawyers or doctors or businesspeople, they do not have to be.

Yet at the same time, advisors strive to place themselves in a role that, for many students, had been played by parents. They hope students rely on them to provide advice related to academics, career preparation, and at times even their personal lives. Students, on the other hand, do not have this understanding of advisors, as noted above. While students generally understand that advisors can provide advice related to academics, they do not understand an advisors' role as that of a general advice-giver, particularly when it comes to personal development. NACADA implies that this does fall under the realm of advising so long as that personal development relates to academics, but the overlap of personal and academic development makes this line difficult to draw, resulting in confusion amongst both advisors and students regarding our role.

Furthermore, the ethical stance that students “need” to be separated from family advice in order to develop is rooted strongly in ethno-centric American individualism, which may not be a belief system subscribed to by all students (Winkle-Wagner 2012).

Cook’s timeline continues by highlighting the most important developments in advising, without providing a clear explanation of what exactly advising meant in these various contexts. She notes that John Hopkins was at the forefront of advising, creating the first “*system* of faculty advising,” with a professor of philosophy tasked with leading the system. “His principal function was to be a moral and intellectual force among the undergraduates,” she writes, reinforcing the parental role of the advisor. Such a task seems far from the role of advising today, although it is difficult to say what exactly it meant to be a “moral and intellectual” force among undergraduates.

Cook differentiates three main types of advising that rose to prominence in the 20th century: psychology, vocational, and academic, noting that there was a great deal of overlap in them. The items she chooses to include in her timeline reflect this, including mentions of student orientations and freshmen seminars, vocational advising, psychological counseling, and academic (course-choice) advising. This culminates in the first professional (non-faculty) advising office, created in 1947 at Alfred University. Moving into the second half of the twentieth century, Cook notes that advising did not draw significant attention until *under-prepared* students began entering college en masse in the 1960s. At the administrative level, it makes sense that advising rises to prominence when instigated by the need to retain or graduate students, and we see this happening again today as funding increasingly becomes tied not to enrollment, but to graduation rates.

Thus develops a problem not involving how students view advising, but how administrators do. Advisors view themselves as being integral to the experience of higher education for all students, both high and low achieving. Furthermore, advisors often have more allegiance to students' interests, as opposed to the university's interests. Yet, administrators create our jobs and pay our paychecks. In most professions, that fact alone would necessitate that employees accept the role designated to them by higher-ups. Yet, academia is not most professions. Advisors strive to have the academic freedom allotted professors. NACADA's stance that "advising is teaching" intends to place advisors squarely in the realm of academic professionals who have a sense of autonomy in regards to their actions. Furthermore, while administrators may be responsible for our jobs and paychecks, they are not always helping craft our mission statements and learning outcomes. In other words, they know we do important work, but (like NACADA) they leave it up to us in many cases to determine what exactly that work is. Yet as happened in the 1960s and 1970s, and as is happening now, when administrators see a need that advisors could address, they step in to tell us to address this need. And thus, conflict emerges.

Developmental advising's self-described goal is to facilitate student academic development. At times, this goal can be in conflict with an institution's goal of getting a student through college as quickly as possible. An advisor may recommend a variety of courses in a variety of areas to a student who is unsure what major may fit him or her best. This may delay graduation, but in the end it is beneficial to the student on a personal and psychological level. For some students, intellectual development may even necessitate realizing college is NOT a good fit. Our charge from administrators will not in every instance allow us to continue to operate according to the goals of developmental advising, but a problematological approach such as I

describe below may allow us to bridge the gap between administrator's goals and our own.

Developing an open-ended problematological approach would not settle the debate, but would at least allow a more open-ended understanding of advising that administrators would be on board with.

The above is important, because it is only with the recognition and resources that come with administrations taking notice of advising (which follows from students making use of advising) that developments can be made in advisor theory and professional recognition. This is what happened in the 1970's, most notably with the publication of Crookston and O'Banion's articles on the Developmental Advising approach. The need for advising that developed during this time is what led to organizations like NACADA, and the explosion of professional academic advising as a vocation. The popularity of advising now is leading to an explosion in advising positions, advising literature, and opportunities for professional development. It is also, however, pushing the envelope in understanding what constitutes advising, and what is at the foundation of the profession. As Cook implies below, the time is ripe to solidify an understanding of the goals of advising and integrate the needs of students and administrators into a foundational statement on advising that can be supported by those groups as well as advisors.

Cook's discussion of advising in the 21<sup>st</sup> century veers from a "timeline" perspective into less objective statements about what advisors will need to do in order to most effectively help students. The focus here is not on getting students through school necessarily, but instead on giving them the knowledge they will need to succeed. She quotes Virginia Gordan (1992): "Advisors must never lose sight of their noble purpose of providing students with an accepting and challenging environment in which they can learn and grow to their full potential." Her belief is that advisors should prepare students for the future, to the extent of calling ideal advisors

“futurists” who are up-to-date on what jobs and skills will be required for students entering the workforce. What Gordan and Cook neglect to discuss is that the skills needed in order for a student to reach his or her fullest potential may or may not be developed in conjunction with the typical university environment; yet, this is the environment advisors work in, and these institutions write the paychecks for advisors. Furthermore, if students do not understand that this is the role of advising, it will not do advisors any good to develop these skills. Cook’s role for advising continues to place advisors within the realm of career consultants. But is this the realm advisors want to remain in? Is there not something advisors could do that is aligned more closely with the teaching and educational mission of higher education?

## CHAPTER 2

### ACADEMIC ADVISING THEORY AND APPROACHES

#### **Philosophy and Theory in Academic Advising**

While history can be helpful in understanding the current state of advising, it does not seem necessary for history to dictate what advisors are striving for in their profession. In strategic planning, vision statements are often used to provide an ultimate purpose upon which actions are based. Philosophy can aid in developing a vision for advising, because it involves the most basic and universal aspects of existence. However, advising has a mixed history with philosophy. The profession has generally focused on the actions of advisors at the expense of the vision. If advisors are striving to be seen in an academic light, however, a theory of advising based in philosophy will be advantageous.

Instead of focusing on philosophy and vision, advising literature tends towards innovate advising “approaches” -- methods of structuring advising programs or individual appointments. These approaches are based in actual practices: they illustrate questions to ask students, ways to communicate with students, ways to structure advising appointments, etc... Philosophy -- as opposed to “approach” -- usually is mentioned only in the context of a personal “philosophy of academic advising,” which NACADA encourages all advisors to develop (Dyer 2007, Freitag 2011)<sup>2</sup>. In contrast to the academic discipline of philosophy, personal “philosophies” of advising do not question fundamental concepts (knowledge, time, metaphysics, etc...) to arrive at a meaningful framework that can be used to make sense of existence. A personal advising

---

<sup>2</sup> Only fourteen articles in the thirty-five year history of the NACADA journal reference the keyword “philosophy.”

philosophy outlines one advisor's theory for his or her own practice of advising, often incorporating advising approaches based on various theories, and then explains how the personal beliefs the advisor has led to his or her choice of these theories (Freitag, 2011). Rarely do advising philosophies involve extensive questioning of basic concepts involved in advising, and even more rarely are they methodical, comprehensive, and abstract enough to be considered philosophical in the academic sense of the world. They serve an important purpose for the individual, but generally speaking, not for other individuals.

The word "abstract" in the above paragraph seems go against the grain of much current advising research, which is heavily focused on practice. Yet the strength of philosophy is abstraction: the very thing which makes many advisors view philosophy as impractical is what can make it applicable to a greater variety of situations. Theories, which are often confused with philosophies, are more popular in advising literature because the connection between the theory and the practice is easier to see. However every theory is based in a philosophy, whether that philosophy has been elucidated or not. Grappling with the philosophy behind any theory is critical if the theory is to be widely accepted (Himes and Schulenberg 2013).

A series of NACADA conference presentations in the mid-90s attempted to explain the importance of discussing theory, specifically in the context of offering an alternative to the developmental theories of advising that had reigned over advising scholarship since the 1970s. The philosophies behind the various theories explored were sometimes mentioned and sometimes not; generally the two terms were used interchangeably, despite having very real differences. A reluctance to tease apart the subtleties of philosophy and theory has been detrimental to the work of advocates of advising theory, as they miss a valuable opportunity to question systematically the advising theories they present, or uncover new theories based in

philosophy, as it is traditionally understood in academia. If philosophy is the study of the most basic components of knowledge, being, and existence, surely it deserves a separate place in the development of theory, which more closely guides specific instances of practice.

What might a “Theory of Advising” based in a philosophical viewpoint look like? A number of articles have been written that apply academic philosophies to advising (Bogard 1981, Champlin-Scharff 2013), however in most cases the philosophies are used *as* theories: that is, they jump straight from a philosophy to an advising approach based on that philosophy. The authors are not claiming that the philosophy should guide all academic advising; rather, they are claiming that the philosophy can guide an approach to advising. On the other side, there are scholars who have suggested that theories be used as the foundation for all advising. Lowenstien’s landmark, “Toward a Theory of Advising<sup>3</sup>” (2014) article clearly outlines what is needed for something to be a foundational “theory of advising,” but philosophy is not mentioned as part of the criteria. His own theory is built on the importance of understanding the curriculum, which may be linked to the concept of the compartmentalization of knowledge, a topic philosophers have been grappling with since the ancient Greeks. However, nowhere is that philosophical basis expanded upon or defended as appropriate for advising. Similarly Musser and Yoder (2013) have suggested that constructivism is foundational for advising practices, but again do not explore the philosophical assumptions about knowledge inherent in the theory of constructivism.

Is philosophy *needed* in order to develop a theory? Clearly not, as the purpose of a theory in relation to advising is to guide practice. Is philosophy beneficial to the development of a theory? Indeed, as it provides a stronger foundation upon which to make claims about what

---

<sup>3</sup> His article preferences the phrase “Theory of Advising” over “Philosophy of Advising,” while stating that they are synonymous (in the sense he uses them) (Lowenstein, 2014).

“ought” to be done. For instance, making sense of the curriculum seems to be of utmost importance to Lowenstien, but upon what systematic evaluation of the nature of knowledge is this based? Using philosophy to establish that basis would strengthen his theory – when asked “why is the curriculum so important?” he would be able to answer at a deeper level. In the end, it is the combination of philosophy, theory, and practice that is the most powerful; when the three work together, advisors are able to articulate more clearly why they practice in the way they do.

Lowenstein’s article provides an excellent framework one can use to test a theory of advising, and I will return to his framework repeatedly in this paper. However, whereas Lowenstein’s theory would constrain the role of advising and limit what could be used as an advising approach, the theory of advising I propose, based in Michel Meyer’s philosophy of Problematology, can bridge the gap between philosophy, theory, and practice in advising by encapsulating the advising approaches which already exist while at the same time pushing forward advising theory by basing it in academic philosophy. My hope, more akin to Himes (2014), is to provide an epistemological foundation upon which to build future approaches and research in the evolving discipline of academic advising.

To do this, I will first provide the reader with an introduction to problematology by performing a problematological examination of different popular advising approaches, focusing on the roots of developmental advising, to unearth assumptions these approaches presuppose as well as questions they do not answer. Next I will provide a fuller explication of Michel Myer’s philosophy of Problematology, so as to suggest it as a philosophy upon which a more wide-ranging and inclusive advising theory can be built. I will work to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Williams, 2007) by showing what it would mean for the advising profession to adapt a problematological theory of advising. Finally, I will address what an advising approach

built on the problematological theory might look like, as well as how an advisor might evaluate the success of such an approach in his or her own practice. I will conclude with how this all could affect the future of advising in its continued push to be a more recognized voice in academia (Shaffer, Zalewski, and Leveille, 2010; Schulenberg and Lindhorst, 2008).

### **Theory and Approaches to Academic Advising**

As noted above, the most comprehensive description of what a theory of advising might look like belongs to Lowenstien's article, "Toward a Theory of Academic Advising."

Lowenstien (2014) devotes a good amount of space in his article to explaining the difference between a theory *in* advising (and advising approaches based on those theories), and a theory *of* advising. He explains that a theory *in* advising, or an instrumental theory, refers to a theory taken from a different discipline – often a social science discipline as with developmental psychology and student development theory, or a humanities discipline as with hermeneutic advising and hermeneutic theory. A theory of advising, in contrast, is a theory developed to "...distinguish advising as a unique field of practice and of thought" (Lowenstien 2014). I have nothing to add to what he covers regarding the difference between theories *in* and *of* advising, and I refer the reader to his paper, in addition to Williams (2007), if there is any confusion regarding the difference between a theory *in* advising (or advising approach) and a theory of advising.

However, Lowenstien's description of a theory of advising requires further analysis.

Lowenstien's focus is on developing a theory of advising which would provide a foundation for what makes advising a distinctive practice. In itself, that would seem to imply that a theory of advising is simply an extended definition of advising. His focus on essential versus incidental characteristics of advising reinforces the idea that what he is providing is in some sense just a well-thought-out definition of advising, as one of the primary purposes of definitions

is to draw lines around the meaning of a word so as to distinguish it from other words. There is a difference, however, in simply defining a word or phrase, and the kind of “deep defining” that occurs in philosophical treatise to indicate the very specific way a word is being used, and Lowenstien does little in terms of the latter. For instance, he mentions the importance of the curriculum throughout his paper, but does not go into detail about what he means by this word and what is behind the concept of “curriculum” – how the word is used in academia, why curricula exist, and more importantly a defense of the idea that some kind of unification of curricula is integral to the goals of higher education. This last idea would have aided him in more fully flushing out an ethical defense for his theory, which would have been quite useful considering that he requires any theory of academic advising to have a normative (“ought”) aspect.

This second characteristic of an advising theory, that it must be normative, requires an ethical component or explanation that is missing in Lowenstien’s article. Why “ought” the job of the advisor be to discuss the curriculum? Why is the curriculum important? Lowenstien seems to state this as fact (“This is the most profound learning in the student’s education...”) without questioning more deeply into the epistemological roots of the idea of a curriculum, and describing at a more fundamental level a theory of knowledge which would justify his theory’s focus on the curriculum. This is not to say that Lowenstien is wrong in placing an understanding of the curriculum as the most important part of a student’s education, but rather that he does not justify doing so. The other interesting consequence of requiring that advising theory be normative is that by doing so, Lowenstien draws a line that puts advising squarely in the camp of the humanities (as opposed to social sciences). Humanities disciplines, as he notes, have normative theories: ways things *should* be, as opposed to ways things are. Social sciences, on the

other hand, generally try to predict behavior as opposed to dictate behavior (such as is the case with student development theory). Implicit in Lowenstein's theory, then, is the idea that academic advising belongs to the humanities, an idea that may not be easily adopted or understood since the history of advising seems to associate it with counseling, which is a social science. Lowenstein indicates that it is important to distinguish advising from counseling, because counseling is "not inherently specific to higher education." However, teaching is not inherently specific to higher education either. The content of what an advisor teaches is specific to higher education, but so might much of the content of what a general or career counselor "counsels" about at a university. Advising theory may indeed need to be normative, but the justification for what advising "ought" to do needs to be based in some kind of deeper epistemological or ethical philosophy, and needs to be reconciled with social science theory if the advising theory is to be adopted by advisors from radically different intellectual backgrounds.

The theory Lowenstein proposes does not fully address how it would fit in with current advising approaches or advising practices; his focus is instead on how these practices would change (Lowenstein, 2009). While this may be in response to the desire to make his theory normative, it is a false dichotomy to suppose that a normative theory must not take into account current practice (Himes, 2014). In fact, a stronger theory would be one which encapsulates current practice *and* pushes it forward; which can be positive *and* normative (as Musser & Yoder's (2013) focus on constructivism in advising attempts to be). It is in problematology that I believe such a theory rests.

Problematology is an epistemological philosophy which states that questioning is the foundation of knowledge (not foundational *for* knowledge, but the foundation *of* knowledge) (Meyer 1995). Philosophy in general starts by asking questions, but then builds upon the *answers*

to construct foundational knowledge. Problematology instead considers the questions foundational. A problematological methodology, therefore, attempts to figure out what questions were already asked that necessitated the answers put forth by a theory (or approach). By working backwards from the premises of the theory to the questions those premises are answering, Problematology uncovers assumptions within the theory that may not otherwise be obvious (Turnball 2013). A problematological analysis of advising approaches, with special attention to the roots of developmental advising, will help us see why these advising approaches arose, as well as highlight which questions they are not addressing.<sup>4</sup>

### **Approaches to Academic Advising**

NACADA uses the term “advising approach” to describe a specific advising practice, generally based in theories taken from other disciplines. In Lowenstien’s terms, these “theories *in* advising” result in codified approaches to advising. The scholarly work in advising tends to focus on approaches: expanding on approaches that have already been described, developing offshoots from approaches, developing completely new approaches, etc... These approaches often zero in on some kind of specific student outcome. For instance, appreciative advising seeks to help students understand how to leverage their strengths in navigating the higher education curriculum. Hermeneutic advising aims to help advisors interpret student stories, with the goal of getting students to understand how they can become more active authors of their own stories. However, these approaches tend to take for granted certain assumptions about the purpose of the work of advising. Assuming a problematological position, each approach is an answer to a set of questions about what is most important in advising. Yet, because these questions are never posed

---

<sup>4</sup> Following this “approaches” section, I delve far more substantially into an explanation of problematology. The above will hopefully suffice in order to do understand the process by which I analyze advising approaches in the following section, but for readers who desire a more complete understanding of problematology first, see section heading “Problematology” below.

in the descriptions of approaches, these foundational stances on advising tend not to be exposed. The purpose of the following section is to expose what “foundations” for advising are implicit in various advising approaches.

Developmental advising is often seen as a foundational approach to advising, because of how intimately it is tied into the history of the professionalization of advising. Before O’Banion and Crookston’s articles on developmental advising, there was little scholarship on advising, and what did exist was haphazard. The developmental approach arrived at a time when advisors needed ideas to rally around, as their work was becoming more important and recognized in the higher education community. Developmental advising ideas, and the founding of NACADA, took advantage of this unique moment and became the basis of advising for decades to come. Because developmental advising is so important in the history of advising approaches, my analysis below uses the primary tenets of developmental advising to formulate questions that can be used in the analysis of other approaches to advising.

### **Developmental Advising**

Developmental advising sees student development as foundational for the work of advising. Advisors hope to guide students through their development in college, introducing questions and information at appropriate times in order to encourage their growth. At the heart of the developmental approach is the idea that there are three parts of a student that are developing simultaneously, and the advisor must pay attention to all of these aspects because they are not distinct, but constantly influencing each other. Students’ educational, vocational, and personal concerns must be addressed holistically. No one of these can be separated and dealt with apart from the other two, which was Crookston’s (1972/1994/2009) criticism of the way advising was being done by many faculty members at the time of writing his article. Grites (2013) indicates

that developmental advising has been so successfully adapted because it has a “simple structure and approach” that is flexible enough to fit any student, yet can also provide the basis for more detailed and complicated approaches to suit specific student populations.

Grites’s “Developmental Academic Advising: A 40-Year Context” (2013) provides the reader with a overview of where developmental advising came from, and where it may be going. More importantly however, after giving a brief history of the 40-year evolution of the concept, Grites lays out four primary qualities of developmental advising: 1) It is not a theory, but a practice; 2) It is holistic in nature; 3) It is based on student growth (success); and 4) It is a shared activity. An investigation of these qualities from a problematological perspective can help us understand the questions various advising approaches that are built on developmental advising exist to answer. If developmental advising provides a basic approach through which most current advising practice operates, then these questions would be at the heart of most academic advising practices. These questions can inform us about the practice of advising, as it currently exists.

*Developmental Advising is not a theory.* In Grites’ words, it is “an approach” or practice, based in theories of student development (2013). This statement is posited in order to answer the question, “Is Developmental Advising a theory?” The fact that the statement needs to be made tells us that the question is important enough to answer; indeed, it was the topic of the very first NACADA journal article (Borgard, 1981). If developmental advising is NOT a theory, but instead an approach based on theories from developmental psychology, where does this leave advising as a discipline of study as opposed to a practice? Again, the fact that the question is implied means advisors are looking for a theory (Creamer, 2000; Hagen, 2005), something more than just a practice, which could perhaps give them more guidance as they employ this practice. Even those who do not believe advising needs a foundational theory admit that the question is an

important one to grapple with. In the literature on developmental advising, the actual theories of student development take a backseat to practices built upon those theories; developmental theories are rarely elucidated to the point of providing a framework advisors can use to answer ethical questions about how to help students “develop.” The philosophical basis of developmental theory is never addressed; if it had been, it may have been easier to answer that ethical question. As Lowenstein (2014) points out, a theory of advising should identify what makes advising a distinctive field of practice, separate from other fields. Developmental theory has proved extremely helpful in designing advising approaches, but there is nothing about developmental advising that identifies what makes advising a distinctive field of practice, nor is there anything inherent in student development theory that ties it to the practice of advising.

*Developmental Advising is Holistic.* This statement addresses a question regarding what aspects of a student’s life academic advising should be involved in. Perhaps because the theories upon which this approach is based arise from psychology, developmental advising approaches insist that advisors pay attention to not only the academic growth of a student, but also the vocational and the personal. Doing so proves problematic though, which is partially what has resulted in a push back from Lowenstein which insists that it is the *academic* aspect that advisors are best suited to deal with. He has a point, as many advisors have no training in personal counseling, and at many institutions, career counselors are better suited to give vocational advice. Yet the very basis of the developmental approach insists that the three areas cannot be separated. (This seems problematic for career and personal counselors as well, if they are using developmental theory.) Using a psychological theory to provide a framework for the practice of advising means advisors without training in personal counseling will be left to interpret the framework without a full understanding of its theoretical (or philosophical) basis (Gordon,

1994); similarly, advisors without training in career counseling may misinform students about what employers in the real world are looking for in prospective employees. Regardless of these criticisms, the overall point is that any advising approach or theory must identify what aspect of a student the theory or approach is most concerned with.

*Developmental academic advising is based on student growth (success).* This, more than anything else, answers the question of the purpose of academic advising. According to this approach, the purpose of advising is to “facilitate growth” in a positive direction, which seemingly is equated with success (Ramos, 1999). The term “growth,” though, is underdeveloped, not subject to the kind of deep philosophical defining mentioned above. To use the philosophical approach of a thought experiment, let us consider the opposite: what would “zero growth” look like? Is it possible to completely cease to grow in any way? If not, how is “growth” judged, and therefore how is developmental academic advising to be assessed? Terenzini and Wright (1987) identified 29 separate areas of possible growth in their attempt to assess growth in college, and admitted that even that large amount proved problematic and may not have included all the ways a student could have “grown.” Other authors writing about developmental advising have suggested that “positive growth/success” involves the advisor and student working together to set goals and achieve them (Crookston, 1972; Winston, Enders, & Miller, 1982; Crockett, 1987). However, would growth not occur if a goal wasn’t attained, or is the act of realizing the goal wasn’t appropriate to begin with part of growth? If the latter is the case, then “goals” are not a good measure of growth, and we are back to attempting to understand “growth” and how we can achieve it. If growth is not the purpose of advising, then what is the purpose? It would be impossible to formulate a foundational theory or approach to advising without addressing this question.

*Developmental academic advising is a shared activity.* This statement answers the question regarding who is involved in academic advising. Is it student-led? Advisor-led? The question is important, as it answers the larger question of authority in advising: do advisors have authority or do students? Developmental advising advocates for shared authority, although the share of authority given to each party needs to be determined by the parties in each advising interaction (O'Banion, 1972). Indeed, because of the transactional nature of advising, in which two people sit down and talk, there will always be some share of authority granted each party. The balance in how this authority is distributed seems to be the primary thing that differs in the various advising approaches.

Developmental advising describes a practice, but is not itself a theory of advising, and does not include a philosophical component. There is a psychological theory at the basis of this practice, but using that theory to establish a framework for advising practice may constrict the methods various advisors use, especially those with a background in the humanities instead of the social sciences. Primarily though, using developmental advising as the basis of a theory of advising would fail Lowenstein's normative test (2014), as developmental advising describes how things are in an attempt to predict what will happen; it does not describe an ideal way for things to be. Advising warrants its own separately developed theory upon which to place a framework, one which can address all of the above questions, both the ones answered by developmental advising principles, as well as the ones begged by those answers.

This analysis of developmental advising has provided us with questions which, by extension, academic advising as a profession or discipline needs to answer: 1) Is there a theory of advising? 2) What aspects of the student are important to advising? 3) What is the purpose of advising? 4) Who has authority in advising? The popular advising approaches below each give

their own answers to the last three of these questions, yet no widely adopted approach explicitly attempts to provide a foundational framework for advising, as that is outside the realm of “practice,” which has been the primary focus of advising scholarship thus far. (Lowenstien provides the theoretical framework, but lacks the explication of a philosophical component which can further legitimize the theory.) I need not belabor this point by providing an exhaustive problematological analysis of every advising approach, but looking at a few primary approaches will allow us to consider how advising approaches have addressed the above questions, as well as whether there are questions that were not uncovered which may be important to a foundational advising theory.

### **Prescriptive Advising**

Prescriptive advising, codified as an approach only in order to provide contrast to developmental advising, is used to describe an advisor/student relationship where student problems are “prescribed” a solution by an advisor (similar to how a physician “prescribes” a drug to help a patient) (Crookston, 1972). Prescriptive advising still answers the questions above, but does so in the opposite manner of developmental advising (which is to be expected since it only exists as a codified approach in order to contrast it with developmental advising<sup>5</sup>). The aspect of the student most important to prescriptive advising is usually the specific-degree-seeking aspect. Beyond that, why the student wants the degree or what they will do with it is less important. The purpose of advising under this approach is generally only to tell the student what courses to take to finish his or her degree, and to explain other related university policies (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001). Note that in a sense, if that is the student’s goal, then this practice does involve helping the student achieve that goal, which could be considered

---

<sup>5</sup> See Lowenstein (1999) for more on the why prescriptive advising is a straw-man approach.

encouraging the “growth” of the student (or at least that compartmentalized part of the student). Finally, the advisor has ultimate authority in the relationship; there is no dynamic give-and-take relationship, and therefore the student is not responsible for his or her own solutions and decisions (Crookston, 1972; Appleby, 2001).

Are there other questions “prescriptive advising” exists to answer? Importantly, prescriptive advising addresses the question of efficiency. In most situations, because there is no back-and-forth with the student, prescriptive advising appointments can go very quickly (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001). Although no advising office would openly subscribe to the prescriptive approach, it should be noted that in many under-staffed offices, prescriptive advising practices are emphasized because despite the larger questions of advising, the primary question in these offices is how to advise so many students with so few advisors (Powers, Carlstrom, and Hughey, 2014).

### **Proactive Advising**

Proactive advising (originally known as “intrusive advising”) involves anticipating the needs of students and connecting them to appropriate resources and support early in their academic careers (<http://www.academicimpressions.com/webcast/proactive-advising-student-success>). This was one of the first alternative advising approaches developed, shortly after the developmental advising revolution in the early 1970’s (Glennen, 1975). Proactive advising is often used in situations where students are unfamiliar with higher education or are at-risk of getting lost in the system and not succeeding (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). For proactive advisors, the most important aspects of the student are what might be referred to as the deficits of the student. Identifying the student’s needs, ideally before the student even realizes what his or her needs are, is primary (Earl, 1987). The purpose is to retain the student in the higher education

setting. Ideally, of course, it is for the student to do well in his or her courses, but at the very least the student should do well enough to avoid dropping out or being dismissed. Finally, the advisor has more authority in this type of approach; students may not know what resources exist or what they need to do to succeed, but the advisor does, and works with students to identify the appropriate resources depending on their problems (Earl, 1987).

While clear in its goals, this approach has been criticized as too highly *in loco parentis*, or at least *in loco helicopteris parentis*. Where institutions identify the question of retention as primary, especially at institutions where the student population tends to be first-generation or otherwise academically under-prepared, proactive advising is more common. Unfortunately, this type of advising also tends to be quite time-consuming, as it involves being in somewhat regular communication with students to ensure they are in touch with the resources the advisor is suggesting. This is unfortunate because often the schools attended by first-generation or otherwise academically under-prepared students do not have the funding to staff advising offices adequately enough to pull off effective proactive advising.

### **Appreciative Advising**

Appreciative advising is an offshoot of developmental advising which focuses squarely on helping students recognize and develop their strengths (Bloom, Hutson and He 1995). It developed partly as a backlash against the “deficit-advising” in the proactive advising model. Instead of focusing on problems (“deficits”) and how to solve them, appreciative advising encourages advisors to help students identify their strengths and capitalize on them (Bloom, Hutson and He 1995). In this approach, the most important aspects of students are their strengths. The purpose of advising is to help students understand those strengths and capitalize on them (Bloom, Hutson and He 2014). Authority is ideally shared in this approach, with the advisor and

student working together to identify these strengths; however, there is perhaps a greater responsibility put with the advisor to (realistically) identify these strengths in order to demonstrate success with the student. (I say “realistically” because sometimes an observer is better at identifying strengths than the individual is.) As with proactive advising, some advisors worry that appreciative advising may impede students’ development by downplaying the very real deficits students may have in some areas, which are necessary to recognize and address for personal growth (Howell 2010). Ideally students would eventually realize their deficits and act accordingly, but because these deficits are not directly addressed, this may take time (which equals money in the minds of administrators).

Both proactive and appreciative advising share a problematic answer to the efficiency question introduced with prescriptive advising. The resources needed to effectively enact these advising approaches are a roadblock for many institutions; advisors’ student loads would need to be small enough to devote large amounts of time to each student, and this simply isn’t practical at many cash-strapped public colleges and universities, especially for students who are not already seen as “at-risk.”

### **The Theory of Integrative Learning**

The theory of integrative learning, also called learning-centered advising, is what Lowenstein (2009) developed to answer the question of a theory of advising. Because Lowenstein is clear that it is not an approach, but instead a theory upon which to base advising, integrative learning deserves a slightly different kind of analysis. Learning-centered advising focuses on making advising a clearly defined discipline, complete with a subject matter (the curriculum) and the collapse of the advisor/professor distinction (Lowenstein 2011). Learning-centered advising calls for advisors to become curriculum experts who work with students to

help them understand how the curriculum as a whole fits together (Lowenstein 2000).

Interestingly, this theory answers the question of which aspect of a student should be focused on in the same way as prescriptive advising; the degree-seeking element of the student is the aspect to be attended to. Other aspects are important, but only as they relate to the student as s/he navigates the curriculum, as this is the purpose of advising (Lowenstein 2009). The developmental aspects of understanding occur when the student can then turn curricular knowledge back around and make use of it in the specific path they have chosen for their life or career; however, their personal and vocational selves are not what advisors are tasked with focusing on. The authority in this type of advising is shared as much as any authority in a classroom is shared: ideally, an instructor helps students discover material, but the learning is self-motivated.

Learning-centered advising as advocated by Lowenstein brings up an additional question that the other approaches do not address: how can advising become a discipline and raise its professional status? Lowenstein (2011) advocates for advisors being on par with faculty, having teaching and research assignments, and terminal degrees. He understands the concept would involve a radical change, and sees this utopian advising situation as something to strive for, rather than to enact quickly. (In fact, the article describing this type of advising in practice is titled “Academic Advising at the University of Utopia.”) In striving for such a utopia, he hopes incremental progress can be made.

However, in Lowenstien’s model of advising, he clearly acknowledges that he is drawing lines which preclude many activities that currently fall under the status of “advising” (Lowenstien 2009). The types of hand-holding tasks which proactive advisors do would no longer be a part of advising, and anything unrelated to the curriculum (non-academic issues,

study skills help, career advising) would only be an advisor's concern as they relate to larger curriculum issues. In short, the idea of advising the holistic trifecta of personal, academic, and vocational development would be undercut, favoring the ability to advise the academic development much more effectively, and leaving the other types of development to other professionals on campus. The cost of narrowing the advisor role, he believes, is what must be paid in order to professionalize the vocation, and provide a unified, comprehensive theory of advising.

Interestingly, Lowenstien does not address student expectations in reference to this idea of advising. Of course, that aligns with his goal of making it normative, as opposed to positive. Positive models look at what students are doing and how they are acting and attempt to meet them there. This normative model talks little about the desires or actions of students. While students do want the curriculum explained to them, whether they desire this enough to justify the radical change in resources required to achieve this goal is debatable, especially considering the types of help they may be losing along the way. Lowenstein acknowledges the problems inherent in attempting to develop a unified, comprehensive theory of advising (2014). However, he also distances this theory from any approaches, saying the two are completely distinct and advisors would continue to be able to practice their chosen approach while adopting this theoretical model. As we have seen above though, many current approaches focus substantially on things that are *not* curricula-related, and therefore without further guidance on how exactly one would marry these approaches with his theory, it seems difficult to see how his theory is not in conflict with some current approaches.

The above analysis has proven useful in identifying the primary questions advising needs to answer in order to describe a foundational theory. Furthermore, seeing how the answers

differed for a variety of approaches, all considered offshoots of “developmental advising,” shows how a good foundation can allow for a great deal of flexibility in practice. In fact, one may object that these approaches all sound just fine without codified theories of advising behind them. The fact that theory is brought up at all seems unnecessary. Yet this observation only works from the advisor’s perspective. From any outsider’s perspective, having one advisor who defines advising through the proactive approach and another who defines it through the appreciative approach leads to radically different conceptions about what advisors do, know, and value. Lowenstien gives us clear answers to what advisors ought to do, know, and value, but at the expense of excluding many of the things advisors currently are doing, knowing, and valuing. What is needed is a combination of looking outside of advising for inspiration, while at the same time developing a theory specific to the advising process. If looking to theories from other disciplines did not provide enough wiggle room to develop a specific enough base for a theory of advising, perhaps looking to philosophy (which is broader than theory) can allow for the development of a theory of advising which *is* specific enough to the profession.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROBLEMATOLOGY AND ACADEMIC ADVISING

#### **Problematology**

The above approaches to academic advising provide adequate answers to the last three questions arrived at through the analysis of the developmental advising approach. Integrative learning provides an answer to the first question regarding a theory of advising, but at the expense of many of the activities currently associated with advising, and without a philosophical basis. A theory based in the philosophy of problematology attempts to bridge this gap by providing an overall framework for these (and other future) advising approaches to fit into, while still satisfying the criteria needed to establish a foundational theory of advising.

Although NACADA maintains a “pick-and-choose” attitude in regards to the multitude of advising approaches, some conflict between them is inescapable. In the advisors I supervise, I see struggles that are a direct result of the personal advising philosophies different advisors have developed. Some advisors believe their role is only to discuss curricular matters, while others reach beyond into personal matters, while still others focus on vocational preparation. Because students change majors frequently, they rarely see the same advisor all four years, and therefore they need to adjust to different beliefs about advising frequently, which is frustrating for the advisors and students. These struggles result in conflict and in-fighting, as advisors cannot agree on the best way to help students.

In a Foucaultian sense (where knowledge and power are equivocal), a theory which could unite advisors behind a common goal would help unify the advising narrative, enabling advising

to have a more powerful voice in higher education. Currently NACADA defines the values of advising almost exclusively in relation to the people or institutions we serve. A quick look at NACADA's core values statement (2006) makes this clear, as each core value is couched in terms of a different group advisors are "responsible to." The final core value does identify that advisors should be responsible for themselves, but the document places comparatively little emphasis on that point, identifying students, others, institutions, higher education in general, and educational communities seemingly as higher priorities. Doing so subtly gives any power we have over to these people or institutions, as Lowenstein has pointed out (Winham 2015). Furthermore, giving power to these institutions is at odds with the ability to write our own foundational narrative.

While re-writing NACADA's core values statement is not my goal, I do hope that Meyer can rescue us from this limbo by providing a foundation which leaves ample flexibility, both in terms of advising approaches and responsibility to stakeholders, while still providing a solid philosophical and theoretical foundation to the profession (or perhaps eventually discipline) of advising. In order to understand how problematology can do this for advising though, it is necessary to briefly sketch out how problematology attempts to deal with the same problem in the realm of epistemology (which, as Jackson (2005) noted, is one of the primary philosophical arenas valuable to advisors).

Michel Meyer's (1995) theory of problematology aims to fill the void left by post-modern scholars who advocate the position that epistemological foundationalism is impossible. Post- scholars see foundationalism in epistemology or ontology as admitting of a metaphysical essence, which they reject the very possibility of. An essence admits of only one foundational answer, but in a fragmented world, different narratives are in a constant struggle to establish the

primacy of their own view of the world. Which narrative has power at any given time determines what is accepted as knowledge at that time. Furthermore, there is no knowledge *outside of* these narratives; narrative-knowledge is what we have, and we cannot move beyond that to foundational knowledge (Lyotard 1979). The idea that there is one true narrative, or one “foundation” upon which all true knowledge rests is an illusion at best, and hegemonically constructed by societal forces at worst (Foucault 1980). The result of the question of foundationalism is a splintering of philosophy and a difficulty moving forward. Lowenstein’s integrative learning theory would be a strong narrative for advising, but a narrative nonetheless, subject to the same post-modern criticisms as other narratives (as Lowenstein (2014) rightly observes when he discusses the downfalls of a unified theory of advising). Meyer questions epistemological foundationalism back to its source in Descartes. Descartes’ *cognito*, where human existence is validated through human thought, begins a long line of man believing in man as primary and supreme in regards to epistemology (Meyer 1995). Western foundational logic starts with the *cognito*, and ends with the logical positivists who maintain that logic (and science/the scientific method) give us access to Truth (or at the very least a truth that has more value than any other kind of truth).

Post-modernism rejected all of these philosophies as essentialist (Kretchmar 2015). Meyer (1995) also rejects these philosophies, but instead of rejecting them directly on the basis of the premise that there could even be any foundation, he carefully deconstructs the arguments the philosophies are built on to show that there is a foundation, but of a radically different nature. For Meyer, the foundation itself is the question, not the answer; we cannot get to truth through deductive or inductive reasoning based on premises, because the foundation of truth itself is the question. Current logical reasoning ignores the question; there is no question that is asked, or if

there is, once the question is answered, the question disappears because the answer is incorrectly seen as foundational. It is this closing off of questions, which he calls “apocritical,” that is the problem. For advising, identifying approaches through the questions they answer is the first step to understanding how fragmented the approaches are, as well as which populations they would be most effective with. However, it is also the way to find out what is important in advising, and what an overarching theory of advising would need to address.

It is important to note that while Meyer agrees with post- scholars criticism of logical positivism as the one true narrative, the criticism is in regards to the narratives themselves, as opposed to the fact that there is only one narrative. Problematology would not be considered a “post” philosophy which accepts multiple, equally valid explanations for the foundation of knowledge; rather, it is a philosophy which claims to find the foundation of knowledge not in any statement, but in the question itself, whenever and however it is asked. When post- scholars question traditional philosophical conceptions of knowledge, those *questions* are the foundation of knowledge, according to Meyer. When the questions are answered, affirmatively or negatively, they disappear, and a narrative is begun, whether it be a “post” narrative or a positivist narrative. Problematology is not an excuse for subjectivity; in problematology there is a firm belief in what constitutes the basis of knowledge. However this belief is a question, not a statement-- a question that must remain open<sup>6</sup>.

## **Questioning**

What does Meyer mean by questioning? Questioning for Meyer has a specific connotation (not associated with the question mark). To understand Meyer’s meaning of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Can an open, unanswered question form the basis of a narrative? Of course, yet the narrative based on this philosophy cannot be questioned without affirming the philosophy itself. Herein lies Meyer’s justification for why problematology is the answer to the overarching question of epistemology.

question, it is essential to first look at the two kinds of answers that can result from questions<sup>7</sup>. The first is an “apocritical” answer; this is, an answer that closes the question, or to some extent even negates the fact that the question needs to exist anymore. Apocritical answers are the types of answers employed by logicians and scientists who treat a question using a methodology (logical reasoning or the scientific method), in order to answer the question that was asked and shut that question off from needing to be asked again (Meyer 1980). Other questions may be asked, but that question is no longer a question worth keeping in mind once the answer has been established. Obviously science (and to take an opposing philosophy, pragmatism as well) is a highly skeptical endeavor, in the sense that generally scientists operate in a problematological manner, working with an established answer without necessarily admitting that the answer is the only and final answer (as well as re-asking questions to ensure they were answered correctly -- the “verifiability of results” step in the scientific process<sup>8</sup>.) Prescriptive advising involves apocritical answers: what classes do I need for a degree? How can I overlap requirements to most efficiently pursue my goal? What classes are necessary for a minor? What is (x) university policy? Meyer does not advocate exclusively against apocritical questions and answers; appropriate identification of them is the important thing in Meyer’s philosophy.

The second kind of answer, the one Meyer believes is less understood, is the problematological answer. In this kind of questioning, the answer does not close the question. Instead of being *the* answer, it is *an* answer, and leaves the question open for other answers. Just as rhetorical questions are not really questions because they strongly imply specific answers, rhetorical answers are not really answers, but leave questions open (Meyer and Cushman 1982).

---

<sup>7</sup> Turnball’s (2014) introduction to problematology provides an accessible introduction to the philosophy. I rely heavily on his explanations in the following section.

<sup>8</sup> Mathematics may be the only realm where true apocritical answers are possible, and even in that realm, different approaches or “questions” to the same answer are possible.

This is why much of Meyer's philosophy comes back to the importance of rhetoric. Rhetoric and rhetorical answering admits a bias, and in doing so admits that there are other answers.

Otherwise, there would be no need for the bias. Rather than viewing rhetoric as "false" or to be discouraged, problematology sees it as preferable (Meyer 1994)<sup>9</sup>.

While there are some forms of knowledge for which apocritical answering is appropriate, by and large answering a question in an apocritical way, or even believing there IS an apocritical answer to a question, is exactly what the post-modernists have rightly critiqued in positivism (Meyer 1980). Problematological questioning is what developmental advising approaches deal with: What do I major in? How can I do better in (x) class? What jobs can I get with (x) major? These are all problematological questions, with multiple answers, and advisors answer them rhetorically based on the values of the advisor and/or student. Integrative learning is also a theory dealing with problematological questions, and would involve a great deal of rhetoric in order to explain the logic of a curriculum that oftentimes is piecemeal and not evident sometimes even to those responsible for creating it.

Another important concept in problematology states that all answers or statements have questions associated with them-- every statement is the answer to a question, whether that question has been asked or not (Meyer 1995). That question is always problematological as well; there are always multiple questions which could result in the same answer. Questions and answers which acknowledge this problematological character by keeping open possibilities instead of shutting them off acknowledge the foundational nature of questioning, thereby making them more aligned with the nature of language and "truth" or reality (Golden and Jamison 1990).

---

<sup>9</sup> One might say that Thomas Kuhn's landmark *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) exemplifies Meyer's theory, by explaining how paradigm shifts occur because of false apocritical answering, as well as the rhetoric enabled by new discoveries.

Readers familiar with Gadamer's version of hermeneutics may see his influence in Meyer's philosophy; indeed, they are both descended from a similar phenomenological lineage. The important difference is that while Gadamer (2004) focuses on a continual questioning process in hopes of arriving at a foundational true communication (the "horizon of understanding"), for Meyer it is not the process of continual questioning and the hope of an eventual "understanding," but instead the concept of problematological questioning and answering that is foundational. The upshot is that whereas Gadamer's questioning is seemingly never-ending, therefore not theoretically leaving room for a practical situation in which one must answer and move forward, Meyer does leave room for this (Meyer 1983). In academic advising, this translates to developing an understanding with the student by answering student questions in such a way as to leave open the possibility of re-opening the original question, similar to what Champlin-Scharff (2010) encourage in her article on applying hermeneutic theory to advising.

### **Developing a Problematological Theory of Advising**

A theory of advising based in problematology would have to take into account the following primary tenants of problematology:

1. Questions and questioning are foundational. We cannot start with statements -- things we "know" -- we must start with questions for which the answers are not already known or established. In this instance, the questions regard the development of a theory or philosophy which can provide a foundation for the academic advising discipline.
2. The answers we develop from these questions must acknowledge and keep open the problematological difference between questions and answers. A definition of advising following problematology would be a way to move forward, but would not answer the question of a definition of advising permanently, apocritically.

3. At the same time, answers can be explored fully, without the necessity of continually going back to the question.
4. Rhetoric is a part of answering problematologically and needs to be understood as such; it is not good or evil, but simply a necessary part of answering in a problematological way. For this reason, problematology is an especially appropriate methodology to use for advising, which has already answered the primary question “What is the best way to advise?” rhetorically with a number of different approaches, all arguing their own strengths.

By applying these four tenants to the problem of a foundation of advising, I hope to arrive at a theory of advising which can both stand on its own and provide a foundation for the work of advising.

### **The Question-Specialist Theory of Advising**

I propose (or ask, in problematological language) that a problematological foundation for advising is that which makes the foundation of advising academic questioning. The question which a problematological advising theory answers is: How can we best answer student questions regarding academics, ask questions of students, and teach students problematological questioning skills? In this theory, advisors would be seen as “academic question-specialists,” a purposefully basic and straight-forward phrase easily understood by both students and administrators. In terms of the above framework, the question-specialist theory of advising adheres to the following tenets:

1. *Questions and questioning are foundational.* Basic academic advising (prescriptive advising) is no more than the answer to the question, “What classes should I take next semester / next year / in order to graduate in a timely manner with my intended major?”

These are questions a student might ask. Developmental advising, and all of its offshoots, deal with no more than adding questions an *advisor* should ask: Why do you want this major? What are your career objectives? Why do you want to be a doctor when you don't like science? What is it about Finance that appeals to you? Why aren't you succeeding in Calculus? Have you been going to class every day? What time-management strategies are you using? Has anything in your life been getting in the way of you succeeding? At the heart of any advising activity is a question. Questions are foundational for the job of advising. For examples, one can look at any of the scenarios posited in *Academic Advising Approaches* (Drake, Jordan, and Miller 2013); in every scenario, advisors are asking questions. The only thing that separates the approaches is the nature and phrasing of the questions, as well as how the answers are interpreted by the advisor and what the advisor does with this information.

2. *The answers we develop from these questions must acknowledge and keep open the problematological difference between questions and answers.* When advisors ask students why they want a particular major, they always have an answer: my parents are in that field, I want to make money, I want to help people. Yet, advisors know these answers are problematological, not apocritical answers. Advisors keep asking the questions every semester to make sure the student has not changed his or her answers. Advisors question the students further to see what values underlie the answers they have, as that can help bring insight into how the question was answered, and which other resources or degree programs may be appropriate for the student. While this has traditionally been viewed as advocating for the “development” of the student, that term seems unnecessary and perhaps even deceptive, as it implies that at some point the student becomes fully

“developed” and no longer needs to question. Approaching advising problematologically, making questioning the central feature of advising, both what we do and what we teach, gives students a skill that will serve them throughout life without giving them the false idea that there is some fully developed point they will reach where they can close off questioning.

3. *At the same time, answers can be explored fully, without the necessity of continuing to go back to the question.* Although advisors want to question students, they need not continually question students about their answers; once an answer is given in a decisive manner, advisors can move forward and explore that answer. Similarly, with the definition of advising, I do not propose that the definition would forever be “advisors are question-specialists.” Right now this is an answer to test out. It should not mean rejecting other ideas or completely shutting off the question in the future. At the same time, leaving the question open is not a sufficient reason to reject an answer. Advisors can embrace this theory based on the reasons I have put forth here, and see what happens in the future to alter or completely change the definition.
4. *Rhetoric is a part of answering problematologically and needs to be understood as such; it is not good or evil, but simply a necessary part of answering in a problematological way.* This is perhaps the most difficult part of problematology to understand, and simultaneously the most practically important. The evil of rhetoric, which would get in the way of understanding, lies in all parties not acknowledging it is rhetoric (Danblon and Rehberg, 2007). Yet, every answer is rhetorical, in the sense that it is one way to answer a question which admits of multiple answers. When advisors close off answers by not admitting of rhetoric (not admitting they are giving one answer among many), they are

not advising problematologically. Similarly, when advisors refuse to give an answer at all, they are answering hermeneutically, not problematologically. (This sometimes happens when an advisor refuses to give an opinion on whether a student should drop a class or change majors.) Openly and clearly identifying answers as rhetorical, as one option among many, allows advisors to avoid being prescriptive while still allowing them to be experts. More importantly, rhetorically arguing for multiple answers to a question encourages students' understanding of the problematological nature of reality. (This is where an advisor differs from a parent, who may be less likely to admit of their answers as rhetorical.)

Lowenstein (2014) discusses six traits that a theory of advising should possess. Problematology clearly addresses most of these: 1) identifying common elements in all the disparate activities, settings, and populations in advising; 2) identifying what advisors do; 3) implying a standard for what students and other stakeholders can expect from advisors; and 4) inspiring advisors to reach for a vision of excellence. The two remaining criteria are: 1) a theory of advising should be tied to a philosophy of higher education; and 2) a theory must distinguish essential from incidental characteristics of advising.

The first of these remaining criteria may seem problematic until we look at Lowenstein's (2014) explanation of why integrative learning meets the first criteria. He notes that advising is "specific to higher education" -- if advisors are academic question-specialists, then the questions involved in problematological advising are somehow related to their academic existence, and therefore meet this criteria, but in a broader way than integrative learning would. Questions need not be related to the *curriculum*, but instead to academics in general, which allows advisors (as well as career counselors and general counselors on a college campus) to address (not answer,

but address) questions related to policies, academic enhancement, careers outside of academia, and all sorts of things that advisors address on a regular basis.

The second unmet criteria is addressed in the same manor, although the argument is admittedly weaker. Whereas integrative learning strives to narrow the role of advising, problematological advising would open advisors to addressing matters that may not currently be under the hospice of advising. I address this objection in the same way Lowenstein does (2015): there is going to be a price to pay, whatever theory or philosophy is adopted, in order for advisors to raise their professional status. This is unavoidable. However, there is already a trend to reclassify and rewrite job descriptions for advisors to take on more responsibility, and taking control of this trend within our own profession would strengthen the bargaining power we have with administrations. This view of advising aligns with Habley's (1994) description of advising as the "Hub of the Wheel" for student services in higher education. If advisors purport to be question-specialists, they can be reimbursed as such, not only in the monetary sense, but in the sense of having a seat at the table in matters relevant to student academics. Problematological advising does answer the question of essential characteristics, but answers it in a way some may feel is too broad. Again, what price do we want to pay for professionalization?

### **The Problematological Advisor**

The idea in developing a theory of advising based in philosophy was that philosophy would provide a broad enough basis for the emerging theory, thereby making it flexible enough to accommodate many different kinds of advising approaches. Past theories of advising tended to rely on theories developed in other disciplines, which made them too specific to be flexible once they were adapted by advisors. Part of the strength of the problematological theory is that existing advising approaches, for the most part, follow the tenets of the theory already. Advisors

deal with questioning constantly; this theory acknowledges that and puts it at the forefront of our profession. The various approaches dictate to an extent how the advisor deals with the questioning, but the basic idea of advisors as question-specialists can be universally promoted to students and administrators.

Adaption of the theory by NACADA would be tedious, as it would involve changing the language in components of the Concept of Academic Advising and Statement of Core Values. Still, compared to the utopian advising aspirations of Lowenstien, adopting the question-specialist theory of advising would be relatively straight-forward. Ironically, adaption of this theory by individual advisors could happen quickly and involve minimal training. Using a problematological theory of advising as the foundation for advising would necessitate only a brief background in problematology in order to connect the dots between the philosophy and the theory, and an understanding of how to integrate the language of the theory into one's own practice of advising<sup>10</sup>.

Learning about the philosophy of problematology is straight-forward, although necessitates some background in philosophy. For practical-minded advisors, a basic understanding of problematological and apocritical questioning would be sufficient. The above examples regarding questions of policy and curriculum (apocritical questions) and major and career choice (problematological questions) would be sufficiently explanatory for advisors who are uninterested in the more traditional philosophical issues of epistemology that problematology deals with. Once advisors have an understanding of problematology, there would need to be an explanation of how to integrate the language into one's own advising practice.

---

<sup>10</sup> The problematological theory also suggests a corresponding approach to advising, discussed below, but does not necessarily require it.

The basic principles of problematology to be integrated into any advising practice are:

1. An understanding of problematological and apocritical answering and questioning, as applied to interactions with students. Advisors most likely already understand these concepts, but do not have the language to refer to them.
2. An understanding of problematological and apocritical answering and questioning, as applied to one's own personal "philosophy of advising." Again, good advisors are always learning and changing—that is, keeping the question of how to advise a problematological one.
3. An understanding of the role rhetoric plays in answering problematologically. Good advisors know not to tell students what to do, but instead to give them reasons they may or may not want to make a certain choice or decision. They already answer rhetorically, although may not explain it to students in such open terms.
4. When fully embracing the problematological theory and advising approach, coupled with the above would be an emphasis on teaching students how to make use of problematology as they answer questions (make decisions).

A problematological advisor is aware of the rhetoric used to answer questions (including the rhetoric I use in this paper to support and explain problematology) and considers other rhetorical answers from other sources (while never answering apocritically the question of how to advise by adhering to any one source). Problematological advisors do not close off questions by ignoring alternate ways of answering. They may adhere to one or many approaches, depending on the situation they find themselves in, but always consider the question of how to advise an open one. Their own professional and personal development is influenced by problematology as much as they strive for their students' to be. No matter what approach they

use, they must understand how problematology is reflected in it, and at some level help their students understand the (ongoing) process of answering (making decisions) problematologically.

A problematological advisor must be self-reflective in terms of what s/he has answered apocritically in regards to advising. Advisors must continually re-examine their practices and re-open questions that were answered apocritically, resulting in automatic responses and habitual tendencies<sup>11</sup>. If the advisor loses the ability to problematologically assess his or her practice – that is, if the practice turns into always addressing the same aspects of a student with the same assumptions – the advisor has apocritically answered the “question” of how to advise, which is not in keeping with the spirit of problematology. Using problematology as a foundational theory for advising necessitates the above, however does not necessarily direct which advising approach ought to be used to achieve the above. The problematological theory of advising can be foundational because it can apply to any advisor and approach that makes use of the problematological concepts above. That said, if one does desire to make the theory at the heart of an advising approach, this too is possible.

### **A Problematological Advising Approach**

As described above, using a problematological approach to advising is not required in order to adapt a problematological foundation for advising as a profession. However, I do want to suggest a problematological approach for those interested in how problematology might deal with the day-to-day practice of advising.

A problematological approach to advising involves understanding how to view students as “statements” – that is, as answers to all the questions that have been asked of them over their

---

<sup>11</sup> For instance, in the scenario described below to illustrate a problematological advising approach, the advisor may ask why the focus was so much on who helped this student get to the answers she was using, or how the focus on external observation and first-generation status may have impacted which questions were asked.

lives. An understanding of Bourdieu's (1977) theory of "habitus" could aid in this endeavor. Habitus refers to the collection of dispositions an individual has to act, feel, and think in a specific way as formed by the social structures they have been embedded in. One's habitus often aligns with the habitus of those they have been surrounded by, but it can also diverge from the habitus's they have been surrounded by. In relation to problematology, habitus refers to the way a student has answered the questions (verbally or otherwise) "asked" of him or her throughout every moment of existence. Viewing the student as this collection of answers enables an advisor to work backwards to understand what questions were asked of the student, and furthermore allows the advisor to re-open those questions, making them problematological instead of apocritical<sup>12</sup>.

A problematological approach to advising seeks first to understand how the student answers questions, specifically in the realm of academics in higher education. For instance, how did a student decide on his or her major? How did the student choose which course to take in a specific area of a core curriculum? How is the student dealing with academic trouble? The advisor slowly gains information from the student about how the student answers questions (makes decisions), until the advisor feels there is enough information to proceed to an open dialogue with the student about question-answering (decision-making). This open conversation involves the teaching of problematology, specifically the connection between values, rhetoric, and answering questions. The goal is two-fold: First, for the student to understand how values and rhetoric lead the student to answer a question in a certain way, and second, for the student to understand that questions are problematological, answers can and should be reassessed on a

---

<sup>12</sup> This approach has similarities to the narrative advising approach (Hagen 2007; Newman 2016) in that it involves learning students' stories, but is less concerned with shaping the story (ala self-authorship as described in Schulenberg (2013)), and more concerned with uncovering the story and analyzing it with this student. In other words, it has a basis in structuralism as opposed to narrative theory.

regular basis, and there is a process by which students can move forward when an answer no longer is “working.”

Below is an example advising scenario using a problematological advising approach. The italics indicate portions of the scenario that relate to an advising appointment, while the portions not in italics relate to how an advisor might reflect on the information gathered before, during, and after the appointment:

*It's an advisor's first meeting with Sofia, a first-year student. From the student records system, the advisor knows she is a first-generation Journalism major, with no AP credits but some dual-enrollment credits from a technical college near a mid-size city about forty miles away. She has a typical first-semester schedule for a Journalism major: the required English course, plus a science (Ecology), a social science (Human Geography), and a Humanities course (Theater Appreciation).*

For the problematological advisor, all these above details about the student are answers. The advisor might prepare for this appointment by thinking of what information would be helpful in understanding how the student answered questions in such a way as to arrive where she is today. For instance: Why Journalism? In what direction does she want to go with that? What was her dual-enrollment experience like? Why did she choose to do dual-enrollment? (Was AP an option?) How would she compare her experience at this college with her dual-enrollment experience? What process did she use to choose her classes for this semester, especially in areas where she had multiple options to fulfill the same requirement?

Note that these questions are fairly typical ones for an advisor. The difference is the depth offered with a problematological method to advising. The above questions skim the surface of what could be asked based on the information above, and this is before the advisor even meets

the student. Many of these questions may lead nowhere in terms of helping the student understand her own questioning and answering process, but the wealth of possible questions means the probability is good that at least one may get her thinking about how she makes choices / answers questions. In the end, the problematological advisor is less concerned with the specific answers, and more concerned with understanding how the student arrived at her own answers.

*The advisor calls the student back. Sofia looks tired but put together. Nothing about her physical appearance seems to call attention to her, although it's clear her backpack has seen better days. As she sits down she immediately gets out a notebook where she's written down the courses she wants to take. The advisor notices she doesn't have a laptop in her backpack.*

*The advisor mentally adds to the list of things that might be helpful to know (note that these are not necessarily the exact questions the advisor would ask): Was it a busy day today? How are things going this semester, both academically and socially? What is her living situation like? What kind of difficulties is she encountering? How did she go about picking those classes for next semester?*

*The advisor sits down to begin the appointment, but Sofia jumps in:*

*Sofia: I know what I need to take next semester.*

*Advisor: Oh! That's very prepared of you! What were you thinking of taking?*

*Sofia lists the classes. Most are appropriate choices. One fulfills a core area but is not something students typically choose (Russian History and Culture) and another is an elective the advisor quickly recognizes as a well-known "blow-off" class (Intro to Entomology). The advisor addresses this problematologically*

*Advisor: Alright, that sounds pretty good. Can you tell me how you choose those classes?*

*Sofia: My boyfriend helped me, he's a sophomore. He told me it'd look good if I came in with a list of classes.*

*The advisor thinks about this problematologically and thinks of more information that would be helpful (again, not necessarily to ask directly, but instead information that may be helpful): Did she meet him here this semester, or is it someone she knew from high school? Is he the same major? Does she often rely on others to help her figure things out? How does she choose who to rely on for information?*

*Advisor: Oh, that was nice of him! Alright, let's see here. That Russian History course is an interesting choice...*

*Sofia: Oh, my family is from Russia. They are always telling me I need to, uh, learn more about where I came from.*

*Advisor thinking problematologically: Does she feel a lot of pressure from her parents? Were her parents immigrants? Before or after she was born? What do they do? Do they want her to major in something specific?*

*Advisor: Oh cool! Were your parents from Russia? Or your grandparents?*

*Sofia: My Dad moved here when he was twenty and met my Mom, who had lived here since she was five.*

*Advisor: I see. What do they do?*

*Sofia: They run a men's clothing store, my Dad took it over from his Dad.*

*Advisor: Oh nice... They don't want you to take it over eventually?*

*Sofia: <laughs> Oh, no, I have an older brother who will do that. They want me to be a pharmacist, but I'm horrible at science.*

*Thinking problematologically: How did she come to the conclusion that she's horrible at science? What have been her experiences with science so far? Is she actually not interested in pursuing science or does she not believe she could do it?*

*Advisor: Gotcha. Well, at least you're taking the Russian History class, that'll make them happy. How did you decide on Journalism then?*

*Sofia: It was a compromise. I always loved English in high school, but my parents wouldn't pay for an English degree. They aren't too keen on Journalism, but I made the case to them.*

*Advisor: Oh, how'd you do that?*

*Sofia: We had a course in high school where we had to research different careers, and I found information on the college website about how employable graduates here are, and what they typically earn. It's not as much as a pharmacist, but I convinced my parents.*

*Advisor: Nice! That's awesome you were able to do all that, and before you even came to college. So, what type of journalism do you want to do? That's a huge field!*

*Sofia: I don't really know. I figured I'd take some of the intro classes and figure out what I like..*

In many ways, this advisor-student exchange is typical; however, it's what the advisor does with this information next that makes problematological advising unique. Although this appointment would be far from over, let us stop here and analyze what the advisor would do with the information already elicited from the student:

- The advisor learned why the student chose Journalism. He also learned that she is willing to stand up to her parents but that there is a threat of funding being taken away depending

on major, that she knows how to make an argument for something based on hard data, and that she may only have a vague sense of what journalism is.

- Further helpful information for future appointments might be gained by asking things like: What is her experience with Journalism? What is her experience with media in general? What types of journalism does she encounter and which ones of those appeal to her? How much was she helped or coached in her high school class about making the argument to her parents? How disappointed are they?
- The advisor learned that in both the scenario of choosing which courses to take and convincing her parents, she did her work ahead of time, but at the suggestion of someone else.
  - In relation to learning problematology, the advisor needs to know if the student is generally asking herself these types of questions ahead of time and falls into a situation where someone helps her come to decisions, or is she just very open to following through when someone suggests she needs to make a decision?

This last bullet point provides the crux for future advising sessions, as the advisor and student eventually get to the point of directly discussing how decisions are made (questions are answered). The advisor will continue to question about Journalism, because she has answered rhetorically/problematically for the time-being, but the answer may change as more information is gathered. As the answer is reassessed, the advisor may open up the discussion about how she specifically makes decisions informed by her values and her internal rhetoric. The advisor may point out how an example of this has already occurred: her values said that she did

not want to struggle through the sciences to make her parents happy, but also that she understood that she needed her families support. She used rhetoric to address the question of what to major in. As she moves forward, it will be important for her to understand that her values may change, which will continue to determine how she rhetorically justifies her choice of major, to herself, her family, and her peers.

Not all students have backgrounds as unique as Sofia's, but all students have needed to make decisions in their lives. Sofia was a purposefully-written example (for the sake of efficiency), but as is often the case, it may be far more difficult to draw out some answers from students. A problematological approach keeps in mind that every statement is not just the answer to one question, but the answer to any number of possible questions. The practice of thinking creatively about what questions exist behind the information we have about students is a feature of this approach that can be helpful to any advisor, regardless of whether they follow up with the rest of the approach. It is not always easy to drag information out of students, but the more questions an advisor is armed with, the better chance they have of doing so.

To recap, the practice of advising problematologically involves first gathering information about the student. Each piece of information is an answer, and the next step is figuring out what questions were asked to get to that answer. These questions will elicit further information, and that information will elicit further questioning. The goal, however, is to understand how the student questions and answers; any information gathered should be in service of that. Although the advisor can never fully understand how a student will question and answer in a specific situation, once an overall picture begins to emerge, the advisor can directly talk to the student about questioning and answering (decision-making). The advisor and student can then work on the same page to understand how the student's values work together with

rhetoric to achieve answers that “work” (for however long they work). When the answers no longer work, the student should understand how the process can be repeated. That, in essence, is the problematological advising approach: to enable the student to understand how the problematological process works in his or her own life.

### **Assessing Problematological Advising**

The assessment of a problematological advising approach opens up the question of advising evaluation and assessment more generally. NACADA has done extensive work on assessment of advising units, but for the individual advisor who hopes to integrate a problematological approach into his or her practice, assessment may need to take on a different nature. In the section below, I outline how a personal philosophy of advising may be expanded upon to provide a richer basis for assessment. When appropriate, the problematological approach is inserted as an example.

Despite NACADA’s support for Freitag’s idea that personal philosophies of advising should be written by all academic advisors (2011), in practice, it is more common that personal philosophies of advising are only written when there is a need: an advisor is up for an award, or a supervisor requires such a statement for a performance evaluation. The literature on advising philosophies is sparse to say the least: Freitag’s article, which appears on NACADA’s clearinghouse website, suggests that the focus of these statements be reflective, describing how an advisor practices, and what beliefs are behind those practices (Freitag, 2011). The only other literature specifically on advising philosophies is a short piece from Dyer (2007), who acknowledges the reflective aspect but also suggests that advising philosophies be thought of as personal mission statements which describe one’s ideal practice. Despite Dyer’s description of these statements as helping shape advising goals and objectives, it is clear from Freitag’s (2011)

suggestions about how to go about writing an advising philosophy that he believes the outcome should be primarily reflective. He suggests that the most important questions for an advising philosophy are:

- Why am I an academic advisor?
- How do I make a difference in the lives of students and colleagues?
- Do my students know their lives matter?

These questions are important in developing a philosophy, but the answers will simply reflect what an advisor is already doing. The reframing of these questions below can help to provide an understanding of the difference between a reflective advising philosophy, and an advising mission statement based on one's philosophy:

- What kind of academic advisor do I aspire to be?
- What difference do I want to make in the lives of students and colleagues? (Or perhaps more to the point: What outcomes do I want to see as a result of my advising?)
- How can I enable my students to know their lives matter?

Personal mission statements have recently been discussed in the medical (Chew, Lee, and Ismail, 2014) and business (Laird-Magee, Gayle, and Preiss, 2015) fields, primarily as ways to guide moral and ethical choices in those fields. In the broader context of the field of human resources, Morrisey (1992) explains that personal mission statements should be used to clarify "...the conditions under which decisions will be made regarding whom you will serve, products or services you will provide, and the fundamental philosophy and personal values under which you expect to operate" (71). I will expand on Dyer's (2007) idea of an advising philosophy as a personal mission statement, which should codify one's own beliefs into a personal theory of advising, which in turn can guide one to become a better practitioner (Hagen 2002). Personal

advising mission statements must not only be informed and personal, as Freitag suggests, but also assessable. The purpose should not be to simply describe what one does, or even worse to demonstrate to an awards committee how great an advisor one is, but instead to act as a yardstick one can measure one's self up against in advising practice.

### **A Good Personal Advising Mission Statement is Informed**

As Freitag notes, advising mission statements cannot be developed in a vacuum. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has developed the broadest guidelines for academic advising units, which are designed to guide practice at any institution. An advisor's individual college unit also have (or should have) mission statements to guide advising practices. Ideally, the mission statements build on each other, getting more specific from the top down. An institution's mission statement takes into account CAS's guidelines, but makes them more specific to the institution. Similarly, one's own advising unit takes the institution's goals and makes them more specific to the goals of that unit. For instance, my own unit's advising mission statement, in addition to directing advisors "to provide information about the academic requirements and resources," includes the directive to "to develop an appreciation for the enduring value of the liberal arts experience" (<http://www.franklin.uga.edu/oa/office-student-academic-services>). A good place to start developing a mission statement, then, is the mission statement of the unit to which an advisor belongs. What goals does this division have for advising, and how are they specific to that division, as opposed to the overall goals from the institution and CAS, and the Concept of Academic Advising as developed by NACADA? Analyzing the guidelines from these sources provides an advisor with an understanding of what advising in general, and advising within one's college, should achieve.

## **A Good Personal Mission Statement is Personal**

While those goals can be integrated into a mission statement, the purpose of a *personal* mission statement is not only to guide one's own advising, but also to help advisors understand themselves. If advisors are to help students understand their own development as learning beings (Crockett, 1987), advisors must also undergo the same process of understanding. A personal mission statement should not just be a regurgitation of a unit's or institution's mission statement, but instead should begin from an analysis of one's own beliefs and values. It should describe what the individual advisor feels is most important to impart to students. For instance, an advisor following a problematological theory of advising would integrate the beliefs of problematology in with the guidelines from the advisor's institution and unit. If an advisor is to subscribe to the problematological approach to advising, the answers to the questions suggested by Freitag might be:

- I aspire to be an advisor who teaches students to understand problematological questioning and answering and how it informs the way academic decisions are made, in hopes that this understanding stays with the student and helps them understand how they make decisions outside of academia.
- I want my students to become more informed and confident decision-makers, by understanding the problematological nature of questioning and answering and how it applies to their day-to-day decision making.
- I can enable my students to know their lives matter by helping them understand that all people are constantly questioning and answering in their lives in order to make decisions. The thoughts, words, and actions of my students can provide others with (rhetorical) answers to questions posed by those around them. Furthermore, the rhetorical nature of

questioning and answering suggests ways to go about most effectively helping others understand how different answers are possible, thereby opening up lines of communication where they did not exist before.

Whether an advisor has standard goals for each student (such as the above), or develops unique goals for each student, the advisor must explain how they achieve these goals. What strategy or practice is used? Being familiar with NACADA scholarship in advising approaches can help advisors describe their practices, but just as an advisor should not regurgitate unit mission statements, they should not regurgitate advising approaches as described in the NACADA literature. Instead, they should take from these approaches to develop their own practices. In the preceding section, I outlined an approach an advisor may use to advise problematologically. Advisors creating personal mission statements should take such an approach and adjust as necessary to describe how their practice conforms or deviates from the approach, instead of simply copying what was written above. Having a good understanding of problematology should help this process since advisors will be able to question themselves about their choice of this approach, and understand what about it informed their decision to integrate this approach into their work.

### **A Good Mission Statement is Assessable**

All of the above mirrors what is in the literature regarding advising philosophies, but the difference in an advising mission statement is that it describes an ideal (or normative), not actual, practice. A traditional advising philosophy is un-assessable, as an assessment of it would be akin to asking students whether an advisor is doing exactly what the advisor is doing. A mission statement, however, enables the advisor to judge how well he or she is living up to ideals based on an advising philosophy. A personal mission statement should not only then explain one's

theory of advising, and how one acts that out through his or practice, but also the outcomes one expects to see as a result of his or her practice. These outcomes, then, can be evaluated through the advising assessment process described by Robbins and Zarges (2011). Although they use the term “evaluation” to describe the assessment of an individual advisor, they use the term in the sense of a performance evaluation written by a supervisor. Self-assessment based on a personal advising mission statement is different, in that it is for the individual advisor’s own benefit. Individual self-assessment based on one’s own advising mission statement enables an advisor to get demonstrable evidence that he or she is operating successfully based on personally developed goals, as opposed to operating successfully in the eyes of a supervisor. Furthermore, it provides feedback about how to adjust practices to better meet his or her own goals.

In terms of problematology, assessment may appear difficult. How can advisors judge whether they are influencing a student’s understanding of the problematological theory of questions and answers? The first step would be to understand that the basis of a problematological approach involves an understanding of decision making. The assessment practices described by NACADA do not specify that how to gain data regarding assessment, and in fact encourage multiple methods for gathering data. A problematological assessment would likely rely greatly on qualitative data, including the discussions one has with students. Gleaning information from these discussions can provide advisors with explanations of how their students are understanding and using problematology as they make decisions in their day-to-day lives. Furthermore, this type of rich data would be more valuable and less prone to (mis)interpretation than quantitative data, which by necessity would need analysis in order to determine whether it provides evidence for an understanding of problematology. Another useful type of data might be an essay in which a student describes how they made an important decision. An essay is not

something an advisor could “assign” and reliably expect to receive; however, survey questions regarding decision making could easily be used to provide evidence for a student’s understanding of the problematological decision-making process. A quick survey to students at the end of the semester would likely give an advisor data they could use to produce a formal assessment suggesting the success of his/her advising methods.

## **Revision**

Just as students should never turn in a first draft of paper, advisors should never be satisfied with a first draft of advising mission statement. Advising mission statements ought to be analyzed to make sure they achieve all the desired outcomes. Double-checking to make sure they take into account institutional and unit goals is important. If one has focused extensively on problematology, the institutional and unit goals may have fallen by the wayside. Similarly, if an advisor focuses too narrowly on institutional and unit goals, he or she may not have made problematology play a large enough part in the statement. Having others look over a mission statement can help make sure there are no glaring holes in it, or missing information that is necessary in order to assess how well the advisor is living up to the statement.

Finally, it is important that mission statements are revisited often, to reflect changes in an advisor’s own philosophy of advising. Kimball and Campbell (2013) suggest that the philosophical basis of advising can be found in William James’s pragmatist philosophy. An important part of pragmatism is the idea that practice is guided by belief, and that the consequences of a practice should always be reflected on in order to reassess those guiding beliefs (Dewey, 1938). As Hagen and Jordan (2008) note, advisors come to the field from a wide variety of backgrounds, and therefore have many theoretical perspectives upon which to draw for their own practice. In interacting with other advisors and students, an advisor is constantly being

exposed to new perspectives and practices which may, and should, influence their own ideals. Reflecting on these changes on a regular basis can allow one to integrate new ideas into one's own philosophy in an intentional, as opposed to haphazard, way. Problematology requires that an advisor keep open the question of "how to advise." Problematology cannot become routine, as it requires constant adjustment to the individual's situation – that is, the way the individual has answered questions in his or her life. If advisors see themselves falling into a pattern of continually asking the same questions of students, this indicates a diversion from the principles of problematology. Revisiting one's mission statement is a good way to keep one's self in check regarding the process by which one is advising, as well as the beliefs one has about good advising. Consequently, changes in philosophy should result in changes in one's goals, and this must be reflected in one's advising mission statement.

Mission statements provide advisors the opportunity to assess themselves, and through the results of the assessment, refine their own practices in order to be more successful. An additional benefit to developing and assessing a mission statement is to provide support for promotions and/or reclassifications. If advisors can provide solid evidence that they have thought deliberately about goals and practices, and assessed how well they have achieved those goals, they can provide evidence that they are worthy of moving up the ladder or getting a position entailing more responsibility. A personal mission statement proves that an advisor takes his or her job seriously and wants to be the best advisor he or she can be. As Grites (2001) pointed out, it is possible to operate without a theory of advising, and also possible to improve without a theory, but it is not possible to assess this improvement without a codified theory which describes the guiding principles and goals one has. A problematological advising mission statement, which lays out one's own beliefs about problematological advising, provides the

opportunity to assess and demonstrate how one has performed and developed in order to become the best practitioner one can be.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

To return to the four primary questions asked of advising, as uncovered at the beginning of this article, the question-specialist theory of advising addresses head on the question of a theory of advising. The aspect of the student most important in this theory is the questioning and answering part of the student: the part of the student that must make decisions and take actions when questions are explicitly or implicitly posed. The purpose of advising is to address students' academic questions, ask students questions, and teach students how to become their own question-specialists. The balance of responsibility in this view of advising would hopefully transition from advisor to student over the course of the students' time in higher education, as they learn to be their own question-specialists.

The role of professional academic advisor came about partially as a way to relieve professors of needing to keep track of increasingly complicated degree requirements, and partially as a result of the diversity of goals of the student body after World War II. The advisor's role was to help students navigate requirements in the most efficient and beneficial way, as well as to make sure the curriculum they were pursuing aligned with their career goals. Often, the role included helping students define their career goals, and making sure their skills and demeanor were appropriate for a chosen career. These duties changed depending on individual advising units in different educational settings, which resulted in confusion regarding the role of an advisor. This confusion persists to today. Interestingly though, the confusion is most pronounced in how advisors define themselves. Administrators understand advisors as

university staff who guide students through their degree requirements in order to have them graduate in a timely manner, which is accurate but incomplete. Students understand advisors in more or less the same way. However, advisors have always aspired to be more than simply an individual who tells students which classes to take in order to graduate. The subtleties of the advising appointment – the questions that are asked and advice that is given – tend to go beyond the simple choosing of classes. However, describing those subtleties in a way that administrators and students understand has proven extremely difficult, let alone describing them in a way that all advisors can agree is accurate.

Without a clear explanation of an advisor's role that advisors and other units in higher education can provide to students, advising risks a loss of relevance. Advisors have the unfortunate position of coming on the heels of guidance counselors in high schools, who have similar trouble defining their roles and do a variety of tasks depending on where they work (Hughey et al, 1993). Advisors hold a different job title, which is helpful in developing a different identity. But that alone is often not enough for students to understand the role of an advisor differently. Currently, a student's understanding of the role of an advisor comes primarily from other entities who communicate with students: older friends already in college, parents, and other university officials. For students entering higher education for the first time, orientation may be the first time they hear the term "advisor," and it is likely from a representative from the admissions office or orientation leader, not an advisor.

Framing an explanation of advising for those outside of the profession, such as admissions staff and orientation leaders, could help students understand what advisors do. However, this explanation needs to be simple and straight-forward, understandable to those outside of the profession. Advisors are pegged as "people who guide students through the

curriculum” because that is easy to understand, and it does describe the primary focus of our jobs. What is less easy to understand are the subtleties mentioned above. Yet, those are the key to helping us gain a more visible role to students and administrators. While many advisors are over-worked and under-paid, and handle student loads far beyond what is reasonable, part of the reason is that administrators view us as simply providing degree requirements. Rather than deepening and confining our role as Lowenstien would suggest, I believe expanding our role to be question-specialists for students would encourage administrators to see us as a first-line support system that not only addresses basic student questions, but also empowers students to be able to address their own questions and make decisions based on reliable information from a variety of sources, not the least of which is their advisor. My focus thus far has been on advisors and students, but ultimately how administrators view advisors is likely to have the greatest practical effect on the status of advisors, and it is to administrators that I turn my attention in this final section.

Generally speaking, higher education administrations by necessity must focus more than other units on the bottom line. This is especially true considering the decades-long drop in federal funding for public institutions (Mitchell et al, 2017), and the competition amongst private institutions to enroll the most high caliber students. Administrations cannot be blamed for needing to care about the bottom line; it is simply their role at the institution. At most institutions, this bottom line boils down to two factors: 1) Getting the best students to enroll, and 2) Getting those students graduated, ideally in four years. Or to put it another way: Getting the students in the door, and getting the students out of the door. The concept of advisor-as-question-specialist, then, needs to address these concerns.

## Getting Students in the Door

Much has been written about the different methods colleges have used to attract students (Kelderman, 2013; Podolsky, 2014), and generally-speaking the things that attract students are not necessarily the things that have traditionally been considered most important in a good education. While some institutions focus on student-teacher ratio or percentage of classes taught by professors (as opposed to adjuncts or lecturers) (Bourbon, 2013), the media prefers to focus on seemingly ridiculous amenities: penthouse-like dorms, water slides, spas in student housing, state-of-the-art athletic facilities, high-profile sports programs, etc... (Woodhouse, 2015). These amenities are flashy, and students and parents alike are attracted by them. In turn, then, the departments that oversee the development of these amenities are able to secure funding from administrations. They have ideas for how to get students in the door, and since this is part of the bottom line, they are supported in doing so.

Admissions departments, while not necessarily seeing an increase in funding, have also been supported in their efforts to find new ways to attract students (Greene, 2011). No longer is it enough to be a top-tier school and therefore know that the best students will apply. Instead, admissions departments must reach out to the best and brightest to ensure that entering classes continue to have the highest GPA and standardized test scores in the institution's history. To this end they hire recruiters to spread the word; at the largest institutions, these recruiters may travel the country or even world trying to attract students (Marciano, 2015). They build massive databases capable of mining prospective student's qualifications and interests to hyper-target select sub-groups at the touch of a button. They secure funding to develop promotional materials and products to entice students. Admissions, the department literally tasked with getting students

in the door, is able to do this because they have a direct effect on the bottom line. The question then is, how can advisors have a direct effect on the bottom line?

The branding of advisors as “question-specialists” may not seem sexy, but in an era of hyper-parenting and tremendous anxiety about college, this role has the potential to be at least as attractive as the student-faculty ratio, if not as attractive as the hot tub in the residence hall. Institutions of higher education can be extremely confusing places, the more so the larger the institution gets. Students and parents may be happy to know that there is someone to help with financial aid, someone to help with housing, someone to help with student records, and someone to help with tutoring, but what is missing is someone to help with figuring out which person can help. Here enters the question-specialist, the one person a student can go to with any question to have it addressed. Preliminary promotional materials that tout such a person will have the ability to attract anxious students and parents. It may seem like going back to the days of *in loco parentis* advising, and in many ways it is, only advisors will see as their task the ability to develop independent decision-making in the students (in addition to addressing their questions). If advisors can position themselves as an asset to the bottom-line of the university in this way, funding to make sure they can adequately do this job is sure to follow.

### **Getting Students Out of the Door**

Currently, advisors *are* tasked with getting students out of the door efficiently. That is, perhaps, the one universal job all advisors have: telling students which courses to take to graduate in their chosen degree program. However, in a way this puts the cart before the horse, because an advisor can do that task perfectly, but if a student changes majors three or four times, they still will not graduate on time. Deciding on a major, and deciding early on, is much more

likely to have an effect on students' time to graduation, and question-specialists advisors who focus on decision-making are perfectly poised to address this issue.

Administrations have begun to realize the importance of major-choice early on in a student's career (Ronan, 2005). Over the past decade, many large universities have opened "exploratory advising" centers, where unspecified students can go to explore various majors (Patel, 2014). At other institutions, first-year advising centers have been developed, under the assumption that most students may need some additional exploratory help during their first year (Doubleday, 2013). Advisors in these centers are trained to match student interests with possible majors, using a plethora of personality tests and strengths assessments. They are trained to have a basic understanding of all majors on a campus, in order to point students towards groupings of majors that might interest them. At some universities, meta-majors have been developed so students can put off choosing a specific major for a year or two, if they know the general area they want to focus in (Mangan, 2017). The thrust overall thus far has been to *inform* students about their options and attempt to match them with a major they are a good fit with. Less focus, however, has been on *how* to choose that major.

The training that comes along with the question-specialist role of advising would fill that gap in advisor knowledge. Oftentimes the student knows what he or she likes, but even when matched with the possibilities that go along with those likes, does not know exactly how to choose one. It is this ability to *choose* that is under-developed, just as much as the knowledge of what is out there. An understanding of problematological decision-making would aid these students in choosing a major as well as ease their anxiety about that choice. The understanding that the question will *always* be available to them – that they are not shutting off possibilities when they decide – will help ease the sense that the decision is going to determine the rest of

their lives. Of course, this all needs to be coupled with explanations of how employment after graduation is dynamic; that is, how employers deal with most degrees problematologically too. Employers understand that simply because a student majored in (x), this does not mean they are only qualified to do work directly related to that area (especially in the case of liberal arts majors). The major was an answer to a question, but that question can continue to be re-asked.

### **The Question-Specialist Experience**

Like Lowenstien's powerful piece on the "University of Utopia" (2011), I would like to leave readers with a picture of what problematological advising could look like assuming it were put into place a mid-size research university.

When Panacea University decided to adapt the question-specialist method of advising, there was immediately pushback from advisors who were already overwhelmed by high student loads. They feared that if advisors were marketed to students as "the people to go with all questions," they would be inundated with emails from students and would not have time to adequately address them all. The administration anticipated the need for additional advisors, and put forth an initiative to hire new advisors to work in a first-year advising center, which would be responsible for advising freshmen in all majors. Jim, who previously had been a Biology advisor, offered to move to the first-year center, because he was intrigued by the concept of advisors as question-specialists. In addition to the standard two-week training for new advisors, these first-year advisors underwent an additional week of training on problematology and the question-specialist model of advising, in order to help them understand the focus on decision-making involved in the question-specialist model (as well as the philosophical background behind the theory). This training was also made available online to experienced advisors, most of whom took advantage of it, since the students they would see in the future would be coming out of this

model of advising. The first-year advising center opened at the beginning of summer, in order to start an incoming class of students under the model.

One of these students was the previously mentioned Sofia, who at the time was a senior in high school. Because of her grades and standardized test scores, she was getting offers from a number of excellent institutions, which she pored over with her parents. While the on-campus ski resorts, beach clubs, and gourmet dining halls were enticing, she and her parents noticed one institution that highlighted a personal student “question-specialist” who is assigned before orientation and is available to address any questions she may have. Since her parents did not go to college, she and they felt unfamiliar with the world of higher education and worried about her not understanding things that other students already know. They decided to visit this school to learn more about the “question-specialist.”

At this visit, as is standard for all student visits, they met a prospective student advisor who explained the question-specialist’s role. Any confusion between the high school guidance counselor’s role and an academic advisor’s role was cleared up during the visit, so Sofia and her parents knew exactly what the question-specialist’s goal was. Unlike other college visits, where she was introduced to a multitude of different offices and ways the colleges could assist students, she left this university with the knowledge that if she attends, she will know exactly who to ask about a range of topics. She and her parents understood that this person may not immediately be the one who can help her, but will instead help her navigate the various offices at the university.

After she registered for orientation, she received an introductory email from her question-specialist, Jim. They sent occasional messages back and forth leading up to orientation, so that when she arrived on campus she already felt comfortable with Jim. During her initial advising appointment, she opened up about her worries regarding what to major in, how to get around

campus, what professors expectations will be, where she can go if she needs tutoring help in classes, and her general anxiety about coming to college. Jim also asked questions to help understand where she is coming from and how she made the decision to attend Panacea University for the specific major she had chosen, and assured her that if she needed anything, she could contact him. Unlike before the question-specialist model was adopted, Jim felt confident that she actually *would* ask questions, and Sofia felt like there was one person on campus whom she could turn to.

Sofia arrived on campus at the beginning of the semester, and realized that she was not a good fit for one of her classes. Because she had been in touch with Jim, she knew when his walk-in hours were, and they met during drop-add week to figure out different options. After settling in to a routine, she occasionally called on Jim with questions, but for the most part felt prepared and comfortable with her classes and academic life. When she realized the major she had chosen was not a good fit, they discussed her different options *and* how she could make a decision moving forward. Jim was reassuring and openly discussed the rhetoric surrounding the different choices she had. Unlike Jim's experience before the question-specialist model was introduced, Sofia kept in contact regarding her thought process. By the beginning of the Spring semester, she had decided on a new major.

In her Spring advising appointment, Jim lets her know that she will be seeing an advisor who specializes in her new major next year, but that she could always contact him with any questions. The new advisor would also be available for any questions though, and has more knowledge of opportunities within her major. She felt comfortable knowing she now had two people she could contact with any questions she may have.

Her new advisor, Lauren, was worried that her incoming students would be more needy because of their on-boarding under the question-specialist model, but in fact she found her new students, including Sofia, much more capable of finding information on their own. Lauren enjoyed her advising appointments more, because the students were more engaged and actually less reliant on her. They listened attentively to her, but understood that the advice she was giving was rhetorically constructed, and they were ultimately in charge of their own decision-making. This allowed for more open conversations, and Lauren found herself able to delve more deeply into the direction students like Sofia wanted to take, as opposed to focusing exclusively on which classes to take. Lauren's time was not eaten up by emails asking simple questions as she had feared; instead, she found herself enjoying her job more because her discussions were more substantive. As for Sofia, she graduated with honors in four years, confident in the decisions she had made but also open to whatever experiences may change her direction in the future.

Redefining advisors as academic question-specialists impacted writing job descriptions for advisors, understanding what qualifications advisors should have, hiring the right people to be good advisors, and creating advising office objectives and goals. Describing advisors as question-specialists though, did not change the day to day tasks of advisors all that much, aside from additional contact from students in the first-year advising center. Advisors found themselves better positioned to help students, especially those who in the past resisted reaching out to university officials in fear that they were contacting the wrong person.

The role of the question-specialist advisor was especially important for those populations of students most at risk for not graduating, including first-generation students, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, transfer students, and students from rural communities. Higher education is, very justifiably, extremely intimidating to these groups of students.

Identifying advisors as question-specialists gave these students a clear individual to ask questions to. While in the past these individuals relied on advisors for degree advice, under the new model, advisors were better able to connect these students with the vast opportunities available on a campus of higher education, many of which they may or may not find out about on their own.

The ultimate goal of branding advisors as question-specialists is to help students better understand and make use of advising resources. Incoming college students are thrown into a radically different environment from what they are used to, made all that much more radically different because of the helicopter parenting trend of the past decade (Reed, et al. 2016). While many students are much more academically prepared than their predecessors, they are also increasingly unfamiliar with what questions to ask in order to navigate real-world situations. In addition to increased academic preparedness, there has been an increase in first-generation college students, who have fewer resources available to them to understand how college works (NCES 2014). What these students need is not a complicated definition of a university representative, but a clear, simple human being they know they can bring their questions and concerns to in order to get help answering those questions. Getting students, and administrators, to understand that this is the role of an advisor can do nothing but help students, advisors, and administrators achieve the different goals each group has, in order to contribute to the overall success of the university, and more importantly, the graduates it produces.

## REFERENCES

- Appleby, D. (2001). The teaching-advising connection: Part III. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 3(1). Retrieved September 25, 2005, from <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/>
- Amatea, E. S., Clark, M. A., Amatea, E. S., & Clark, M. A. (2005). Conceptions of the school counselor role interview protocol. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(1), 16-27.
- Amidon, E. J. & Flanders, N. A. (1967). *The role of the teacher in the classroom: a manual for understanding and improving teachers' classroom behavior*. Minneapolis: Paul S. Amidon & Associates.
- Barr, Robert B., & Tarr, John. (1995). From teaching to learning: a new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change*, (6), 12-25.
- Bishop, J., Mane, F., Bishop, M., Moriarty, J., Murnane, R., & Steinberg, L. (2001). The role of end-of-course exams and minimum competency exams in standards-based reforms. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, (4), 267-345. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/20067236>
- Bitz, K. (2010). Measuring advisor relationship perceptions among first-year students at a small midwestern university. *NACADA Journal*, 30(2), 53-64.
- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

- Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., He, Y. (2013). Appreciative Advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: strategies that teach students to make the most of college*. (pp. 83-99). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Borgard, J. H. (2009). Toward A Pragmatic Philosophy of Academic Advising. *NACADA Journal*, 29(1), 43-46.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Boria, S. (2004). Students as "customers." *On the Horizon*, 72(4), 158-62.
- Champlin-Scharff, S. (2010). Advising with Understanding: Considering Hermeneutic Theory in Academic Advising. *NACADA Journal*, 30(1), 59-65.
- Chew, B. H., Lee, P. Y., & Ismail, I. Z. (2014). "Personal mission statement": An analysis of medical students' and general practitioners' reflection on personal beliefs, values, and goals in life. *Malaysian Family Physician*, 9(2), 26-33.
- Clarke, S. C. T. (1970). General teaching theory. *The Journal of Teacher Education*, 21, 403-16.
- Cook, S. (1999). A Chronology of Academic Advising in America. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 1(2). Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/011015sc.htm>.
- Coogan, T., & DeLucia-Waack, J. (2007). Students' Reported Contact with and Perception of the Role of High School Counselors: An Examination of the ASCA Role Standard Domains. *Journal Of School Counseling*, 5(5).
- Council for the Advancement of Standards. (2005). Academic Advising Programs: CAS Standards and Guidelines. Retrieved from <http://www.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=E864D2C4-D655-8F74-2E647CDECD29B7D0>

- Creamer, D. (2000). Use of theory in academic advising. In V. N. Gordon, & W. R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 18-34). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Crockett, D. S. (Ed.). (1987). *Advising skills, techniques and resources*. American College Testing Program.
- Crookston, B. B. (1972, 1994). A Developmental View of Academic Advising As Teaching. *NACADA Journal*, 14(2), 5-9.
- Danblon, E., & Rehberg, V. (2007). Problematology, Language, Rhetoric. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 242(4). 365.
- Darling, Ruth. (2015). The academic adviser. *The Journal of General Education*, 64(2), 90-98.
- David S. Crockett, Ed. (1987). *Advising Skills, Techniques and Resources: A Compilation of Materials Related to the Organization and Delivery of Advising Services*. Iowa City, Iowa. ACT Corporation.
- Delucchi, M., & Korgen, K. (2002). "We're the customer—we pay the tuition": Student consumerism among undergraduate sociology majors. *Teaching Sociology*, 30(1), 100-107.
- Dyer, A. N. (2007). Advisement philosophy. In Folsom, P. (Ed.), *The new advisor guidebook: Mastering the art of advising through the first year and beyond* (Monograph No. 16) (pp. 47-48). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.
- Earl, W. R. (1988). Intrusive Advising of Freshmen in Academic Difficulty. *NACADA Journal*, 8(2), 27-33.
- Ender, S. C., Winston, R. B. and Miller, T. K. (1982), Academic advising as student development. *New Directions for Student Services*, 3-18.

- Foucault, M., & Gordon, C. (1980). *Power/knowledge : selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, c1980.
- Freitag, D. (2011). Creating a Personal Philosophy of Academic Advising. Retrieved from NACADA *Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site:  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Personal-philosophy-of-academic-advising.aspx>
- Gadamer, H., Marshall, D. G., & Weinsheimer, J. (2004). *Truth and method*. London; New York: Continuum.
- Gage, N. L. (1963). *Handbook of research on teaching; a project of the American Education Research Association*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Gillispie, B. (2003). History of academic advising. Retrieved from NACADA *Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* web site:  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/History-of-academic-advising.aspx>
- Glennen, R.E. (1975). Intrusive college counseling. *College Student Journal*, 9 (1).
- Golden, J. L., & Jamison, D. L. (1990). Meyer's Theory of Problematology. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 174(3), 329-351.
- Gordon, V. (1992). "Meeting the needs of tomorrow's learners and tomorrow's workplace." *Academic Advising*, 27, 381-392.
- Gordon, V. N. (2004). The Evolution of Academic Advising: One Institution's Historical Path. *NACADA Journal*, 24(1-2), 17-23.
- Green, T. F. (1971). *The activities of teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Grites, T. J. (2000, March 1). Re: Why do we need theories of advising? Can't we operate without them? Advising Forum, *The Mentor*. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/forum/foru0003.htm>.
- Grites, T. J. (2013). Developmental Academic Advising: A 40-Year Context. *NACADA Journal*, 33(1), 5-15.
- Habley, W.R. (1994). Key Concepts in Academic Advising. In *Summer Institute on Academic Advising Session Guide* (p.10). Manhattan, KS: NACADA The Global Community for Academic Advising.
- Habley, W.R. (2009). Academic advising as a field of inquiry. *NACADA Journal*, 29(2), 76–83.
- Hagen, P. (2000, March 2). Re: Why do we need theories of advising? Can't we operate without them? Advising Forum, *The Mentor*. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/forum/foru0003.htm>.
- Hagen, P. (2005) From the Guest Editor. *NACADA Journal*, 26(2), 3-8.
- Hagen, P. L. (2007). Narrative theory and academic advising. *Academic Advising Today*, 30(3). Retrieved from [http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW30\\_3.htm#4](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW30_3.htm#4)
- Heisserer, D.L. & Parette, P. (2002). Advising at-risk students in college and university settings. *College Student Journal*, 36(1), 69-84.
- Himes, H. A. (2014) Strengthening Academic Advising by Developing a Normative Theory. *NACADA Journal*, 34(1), 5-15.
- Himes, H., & Schulenberg, J. (2013). Theoretical reflections: Theory and philosophy should always inform practice. *Academic Advising Today*, 36(3). Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View->

Articles/Theoretical-Reflections-Theory-and-Philosophy-Should-Always-Inform-Practice.aspx.

Hirst, P. H. (2006) What is teaching? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 3(1), 5-18.

Howell, N. G. (2010, January 1). Appreciative Advising from the Academic Advisor's Viewpoint: A Qualitative Study. *ProQuest LLC*.

Hughey, K. F., Gysbers, N. C., & Starr, M. (1993). Evaluating comprehensive school guidance programs: Assessing the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers. *School Counselor*, 41(1), 31-35.

Hutson, B. L., Ye, H., & Bloom, J. L. (2014). How Appreciative Advising is Revolutionizing Academic Advising Framework, Evolution and Possible Future Directions. *AI Practitioner*, 16(2), 47-53. doi:10.12781/978-1-907549-19-9-8

Jackson, R. L. (2005). Academic advising and philosophy. *NACADA Journal*, 25(2), 30-36.

Jeschke, M. P., Johnson, K. E., & Williams, J. R. (2001). A comparison of intrusive and prescriptive advising of psychology majors at an urban comprehensive university. *NACADA Journal*, 21(1&2), 46-58.

Jordan, P. (2003). What would a unified theory of academic advising require? *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <http://psu.edu/dus/mentor>.

Kimball, E., & Campbell, S. M. (2013). Advising strategies to support student learning success. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp. 3-15). San Francisco, CA: Joessey-Bass.

Kretchmar, J. (2015). Postmodernism. *Research Starters: Education (Online Edition)*.

- Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Laird-Magee, T., Gayle, B. M., & Preiss, R. (2015). Personal Values and Mission Statement: A reflective activity to aid moral development. *Journal of Education for Business*, 90(3), 156-163.
- Lowenstein, M. (2000, April). Academic advising and the “logic” of the curriculum. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal* 2(2). Retrieved from <http://psu.edu/dus/mentor/>.
- Lowenstein, M. (2009). If Advising is Teaching, What Do Advisors Teach? *NACADA Journal*, 29(1), 123-131.
- Lowenstein, M. (2011, September 28). Academic advising at the University of Utopia. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from <http://psu.edu/dus/mentor>.
- Lowenstein, M. (2014). Toward a Theory of Advising. *Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 1.
- Lowenstein, M. (2015). General Education, Advising, and Integrative Learning. *The Journal of General Education*, 2, 117.
- Lynch, M. L. (2004). A survey of undergraduate student reactions to academic advising. *NACADA Journal*, 24(1&2), 62–74.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1984.
- Meyer, M. (1995). *Of problematology: philosophy, science, and language*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, c1995.
- Meyer, M. (1994). *Rhetoric, language, and reason*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c1994.

- Meyer, M. (1983). *Meaning and reading: a philosophical essay on language and literature*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1983.
- Meyer, M., & Cushman, M. (1982). Argumentation in the Light of a Theory of Questioning. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 15(2), 81-103. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237314>
- Meyer, M. (1980). Dialectic and questioning: Socrates and Plato. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 17, 281-289.
- Miller, M. A., Jordan, P., & Drake, J. K. (2013). *Academic advising approaches : strategies that teach students to make the most of college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Moore, N. C. (2016). U-M, IBM partner on advanced conversational computing system. *University of Michigan News*. Retrieved from <http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/23407-u-m-ibm-partner-on-advanced-conversational-computing-system>.
- Morrisey, G. L. (1992). Your personal mission statement: a foundation for your future. *Training & Development*, 46(11), 71-75.
- Mottarella, K. E., Fritzsche, B. A., & Cerabino, K. C. (2004). What do students want in advising? A policy capturing study. *NACADA Journal*, 24(1&2), 48–61.
- Musser, R. & Yoder, F. (2013). The application of constructivism and systems theory to academic advising. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: strategies that teach students to make the most of college*. (pp. 179-196). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2006). NACADA concept of academic advising. Retrieved June 2016 from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web Site:

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising-a598.aspx>

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA core values of academic advising. Retrieved

from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreValues.aspx>

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2016). Suggested Basic Readings in Academic Advising. Retrieved June 2016 from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web Site:

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/portals/0/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/documents/Suggested-Readings-in-Academic-Advising.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2014). *Profile of Undergraduate Students: 2011-2012*. (Reference Web Tables). Washington, DC: Author.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (2017). 2017 Topic Module: Academic Advising. Retrieved 3 April 2018 from:

[http://nsse.indiana.edu/2017\\_institutional\\_report/pdf/Modules/NSSE17%20Module%20Summary-Academic%20Advising.pdf](http://nsse.indiana.edu/2017_institutional_report/pdf/Modules/NSSE17%20Module%20Summary-Academic%20Advising.pdf)

O'Banion, T. (1972). An academic advising model. *Junior College Journal*, 42, 62-69.

Powers, K. L., Carlstrom, A. H., & Hughey, K. F. (2014). Academic advising assessment practices: Results of a national study. *NACADA Journal*, 34(1), 64–77.

doi: [10.12930/NACADA-13-003](https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-13-003)

- Propp, K. M., & Rhodes, S. C. (2006). Informing, apprising, guiding, and mentoring: Constructs underlying upperclassmen expectations for advising. *NACADA Journal*, 26(1), 46-55.
- Ramos, Manuel 'Buddy'. (Speaker). (1999). Academic Advising: Campus Collaborations to Foster Retention (video recording in conjunction with PBS Adult Learning Service). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.
- Reed, K., Duncan, J. M., Lucier-Greer, M., Fixelle, C., & Ferraro, A. J. (2016). Helicopter parenting and emerging adult self-efficacy: Implications for mental and physical health. *Journal Of Child And Family Studies*, 25(10), 3136-3149.
- Robbins, R., & Zarges, K. M. (2011). Assessment of academic advising: a summary of the process. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources website: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Assessment-ofacademic-advising.aspx>
- Schulenberg, J.K. & Lindhorst, M. J. (2008) Advising is Advising: Toward Defining the Practice and Scholarship of Academic Advising. *NACADA Journal* 28(1), 43-53.
- Schulenberg, J.K. (2013). Academic advising informed by Self-authorship theory. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: strategies that teach students to make the most of college*. (pp. 121-136). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Shaffer, L. S., Zalewski, J. M., & Leveille, J. (2010) The Professionalization of Academic Advising: Where Are We in 2010? *NACADA Journal* 30(1), 66-77.
- Schofield, H. (1972). *The philosophy of education: an introduction*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Smith, B.O. (1961). A concept of teaching. In B. O. Smith & R. H. Ennis (Eds.), *Language and Concepts in Education*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

- Smith, J. S. (2002). First-year student perceptions of academic advisement: A qualitative study and reality check. *NACADA Journal*, 22(2), 39-49.
- Terenzini, P., & Wright, T. (1987). Influences on Students' Academic Growth during Four Years of College. *Research in Higher Education*, 26(2), 161-179. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40195784>
- Turnbull, N. (2007). Problematology: A New Paradigm for Thought. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 242(4). 349-352.
- Turnbull, N. (2013). The questioning theory of policy practice: outline of an integrated analytical framework. *Critical Policy Studies*, 7(2), 115-131. doi:10.1080/19460171.2013.776501
- Turnbull, N. (2014). *Michael Meyer's Problematology: Questioning and Society (Bloomsbury Studies in Philosophy)*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Upcraft, M. L., & Kramer, G. (1995). Intrusive advising as discussed in the first year academic advising: Patterns in the present, pathways to the future. *Academic Advising and Barton College*, 1-2.
- Walker R., Zelin A., Behrman C., & Strand R. (2017). Qualitative analysis of student perceptions: 'Some advisors care. Some don't.' *NACADA Journal* 37(2), 44-54.
- Williams, S. (2007). From Theory to Practice: The Application of Theories of Development to Academic Advising Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* website:  
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Applying-Theory-to-Advising-Practice.aspx>

- Winkle-Wagner, R. (2012). Self, College Experiences, and Society: Rethinking the Theoretical Foundations of Student Development Theory. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 30(2), 45-60.
- Winham, I. P. (2015). Marc Lowenstein and the Future of Academic Advising: The View from Penn State. *Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 1.
- Yudof, M. (2003). Changing scene of academic advising. *NACADA Journal* 23(1&2), 7-9.