COMPARING OUTCOMES OF TWO INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

TO A CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE

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COMPARING OUTCOMES OF TWO INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES TO A CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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TO A CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE

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College students frequently are not adequately prepared to make academic and career choices upon entering the college environment despite the need to focus on specific goals early in their college careers. Career development professionals offer an array of services to students seeking assistance with their career development processes, including the college career planning course. Most studies of college career planning courses over the past 30 years have sought to determine whether the classes are effective in assisting students with the career planning process. The overwhelming majority of the studies have found that college career courses work. The question that has thus far received less attention is, why do college career planning courses work?

Recent meta-analytic studies have suggested that career interventions offer more benefit in terms of outcome variables when they incorporate five critical components. The current study compares outcomes of two different instructional approaches to a college career development course. Existing course plans were used for one group, and a special curriculum that included purposeful infusion of the five critical components into course activities was developed for the other group.

A total of 52 freshman and sophomore students at a large public Southeastern university participated in the study as part of their enrollment in the career planning course. Students were assessed at the first and last class meetings of the semester using instruments designed to measure career development outcomes. The outcome variables of interest were career decision making self-efficacy, career decidedness, career indecision, and the presence of negative career thoughts. Students also completed a personality inventory.

Results indicate that both courses were successful in improving outcomes on each of the four measures. Demographic and personality characteristics did not have a significant impact on students' receptiveness to the course interventions. Students in the critical components course commented on their perceptions of course activities, yielding interesting ideas. Implications of the study and directions for future research are addressed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The current study was designed to assess the impact of including five intervention components, for which there is preliminary evidence of improved outcomes in career counseling, in an introductory-level career exploration course. This chapter will present the problems addressed by this study, including lack of preparedness of many college students to make informed career decisions; inefficient use by administrators of an introductory career exploration course; and uncertainty on the part of service-deliverers as to the reasons the course seems to influence students in a positive manner. The significance of the problem to counseling professionals is outlined in this chapter. Also, purposes of the study are enumerated, and research questions and corresponding hypotheses are presented.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study centers on the need for improvement in meeting college students' career development needs. Specifically, the problem addressed focuses on delivery of services in the specific form of a career planning course traditionally offered in universities nationwide. This problem impacts at least three primary groups within the university: students, administrators, and service-deliverers.

The problem for college students. In today's educational system, high school students nationwide face the responsibility of planning for college attendance as early as

their sophomore or junior year. Many high schools are unable to provide a system of guidance that allows students to make informed decisions regarding college applications. In a longitudinal study of students' development from second through twelfth grade, Helwig (2004) assessed students' perceptions of the degree to which their schools had prepared them for pursuing a career plan with the following questions: "Can you see a connection between your school subjects and your occupational direction?" to which students responded on a scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Very much so"), and "Since you have been in high school, do you feel that the school has helped and supported you in your search for career preparation?" to which students responded on a scale from 1 ("No") to 7 ("Yes"), with 4 representing "Sometimes." The mean response from twelfth-grade students regarding the first question was 4.75 (SD = 1.84), and with a mean of 4.52 (SD = 1.65) for the second question. Although it is clear that high school students' ratings of school activities and interventions aimed at fostering their career development and helping them make informed decisions reflect rather mediocre assistance, Helwig suggested that students' involvement in part-time jobs, community activities, household chores, and hobbies may lead to development and maintenance of a sense of self-efficacy in performing certain kinds of tasks, which in turn impacts students' career aspirations.

Not all students, however, participate in a diverse array of activities during their high school years. Students are often unaware of how their specific abilities, interests, and values translate into viable career options (Adams, 1974). They are therefore often unprepared for the decisions that the application process requires: to which colleges or schools they should apply, and in which specific areas of study. Regarding college students, Peng (2001) cited research that suggests "50 percent or more of all college

students have career related problems" (p. 30). Davis and Horne (1986) suggested that students "want help with the difficult task of selecting a major, selecting a career, and implementing their choices" (p. 255).

When college freshmen arrive in the university setting, they are typically faced with changes in nearly every aspect of their lives (Sepich, 1987). Students experience a multitude of new freedoms, including the freedom to choose their own courses of study, the freedom to select their class schedules, and the freedom to commit as much or as little effort, time, and energy to their academic pursuits as they deem appropriate. This freedom, however, presents itself concurrently with an increase in personal responsibility and a decrease in guidance from parents, educators, and the academic establishment in general.

According to Astin (1993) "Many students attend college primarily to prepare for a career" (p. 245). Thus, it seems that students are aware of their ultimate goal, but may have difficulty focusing on the specific steps and direction to take in reaching that goal. As described above, students most likely have chosen a particular program of study, as early as their junior year of high school, to which they are expected to maintain a commitment in their early registration process. These decisions may result from the use of any number of uninformed modes of thinking (Ginn, 1973/4; Goodson, 1981). Often, freshman students choose to pursue a degree program due to external factors, including parental expectations, opinions of well-meaning advice-givers, and peer influences. Students may also limit their options due to misconceptions about their own abilities and talents (Goodson). Likewise, they may choose to commit to options that are beyond the scope of their natural interests and abilities (Tinto, 1982). In short, students are too often

uninformed about themselves and their career options to make sound decisions about their academic pursuits (Adams, 1974).

This lack of self-knowledge and corresponding knowledge of career options frequently leads students to become dissatisfied and discouraged with their initial choices for college study (Ginn, 1973/4; Goodson, 1981). This dissatisfaction may manifest in several different scenarios. One problem of great importance to college administrators and students alike, and one that is especially influenced by students' dissatisfaction with their academic decisions is attrition. Tinto (1993) reported that more than 25% of students entering four-year colleges drop out after only one year, and only about 60% of students who enroll earn degrees. More recently, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2007) reported that "only 67% of students at four-year institutions complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling" (p. 13). Although more encouraging than Tinto's estimates, these recent estimates suggest that approximately one third of students who begin college do not persist. In the report, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education highlights the problem that the United States is lagging behind other countries in terms of persistence toward a college degree.

In a study of factors impacting students' intent to persist, Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) indicated the following effect sizes: Institutional Commitment (0.56), Encouragement from Friends and Family (0.44), and Goal Commitment (0.27) (p. 134). Similarly, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Wolfle (1986) found that only social integration, goal commitment (importance to the student of graduating from college) and institutional commitment (student's level of satisfaction with institutional choice and importance to the student of graduating from the present institution) had significant direct effects on

persistence. However, as Peng (2001) stated, "…there are some students who fail to see meaningful relationships between what they are being asked to learn and what they will do when they leave college" (p. 39). Although perhaps not as key a factor as institutional commitment or support from significant others, goal commitment is still an important factor in students' intentions to persist or to leave the academic setting. This suggests that there is a need for programming that helps students become more confident and secure in their ability to set and achieve academic and career goals.

An additional problem resulting from students' discouragement with their college experience is poor academic performance (Birch & Mann, 1977; Tinto, 1982). Evidence suggests that people who are pursuing work (or, in this case, studies) in an area of personal interest are more likely to be successful and to persevere in the face of adversity. Students pursuing a program that they chose on the basis of insufficient information are less likely to sustain the motivation that academic success in college requires (Birch & Mann; Tinto). Their poor performance only serves to add to the self-doubt, frustration, and confusion that their unsuccessful academic experience may have already created. Students may experience messages from others that reinforce these negative feelings, and may blame themselves, when in fact, they were pursuing an area of little interest and/or one to which their personal strengths may not have corresponded well (Birch & Mann; Ginn, 1973/4; Goodson, 1981).

A final problem facing college students who lack self-knowledge and knowledge of career and academic options is indecision about a program of study and the corresponding anxiety that can accompany indecision. Sepich (1987) defined career indecision as "a multidimensional state which includes, but is not limited to, being unsure

of a college major or future career" (p. 8). Noel, Levitz, and Saluri (1985) reported that about three-fourths of students could be classified as undecided at some point in their college careers. In an unpublished master's thesis, Chi (as cited in Peng, 2001) wrote that one-fourth of college students made a career decision but felt uncomfortable, while another one-fourth had not made a decision and felt uncomfortable. Astin (1993) summarized the situation: "A substantial literature on career development during the undergraduate years indicates that students frequently change their plans after they enter college" (p. 246). This is not surprising, considering Sepich's assertion that, "Because of the transitional nature of college for most individuals, career indecision reflects the contributions of an identity search, a clarification of values, and an entry into autonomy" (p. 8).

While career indecision may be a common theme among college students, the indecision may still pose a threat to the student's academic and personal development (Bechtol, 1978). Although minor modifications to a program of study may not result in significant losses, more radical changes may mean that students lose valuable credits toward their degrees, take longer to complete required courses, and subsequently, spend far more than the four or five years generally anticipated to achieve a college degree. This can present a hardship to students in multiple ways, not the least of which is the financial burden that can come with unexpected educational expenses. Additional problems may arise for the student in the form of messages from family and significant others, suggesting that they are somehow defective or incompetent (Bechtol). Worse, some students may persist in studying an area of little interest or talent in an attempt to avoid

the negative repercussions associated with changing majors (e.g., Krumboltz & Levin, 2004).

The problem for administrators. College administrators are under enormous pressure to account for student retention, graduation rates, and even job placement for graduates of their institution. Astin (1993) outlined three institutional roles in students' career development: developing skills and competencies needed for various career fields, awarding degrees and/or certifications, and providing guidance and counseling. Peng (2001) concurred, stating, "Due to a changing economy, technological advances, and the high rates of unemployment, career education needs to be seen as an integral and an interactive part in higher education" (p. 30). However, best practices are not always employed in securing career development instruction and guidance for college students.

In addition to the problem of uninformed decision-making from the outset of the college freshman's experience, potentially contributing to attrition, poor academic performance, and lower graduation rates, other administrative issues seem pertinent to the current problem. Many administrators place little importance on furthering students' understanding of their own strengths relative to the working world, and on finding congruence in their personal and professional identities (Halasz & Kempton, 2000). Most university curricula in the United States offer some form of a career planning course. However, these courses are often perceived by administrators and students alike as fillers, or courses which will provide an easy boost in grade point averages and which are of otherwise limited utility. The courses are often not taught by university faculty, but frequently are instructed by graduate students who may or may not have any interest or knowledge in the area of career development. Halasz and Kempton pointed out that,

"career courses require instructors who can translate theory and research into practical applications for students," and that, "Career course instructors also need to be trained to use standardized assessments, to screen participants, and to understand referral procedures" (p. 166). Halasz and Kempton discussed the problem for many colleges and universities in offering a career course, concluding that, "It seems that the long battle for collaboration between student and academic affairs departments is still being waged in the area of career services" (p. 164). In many cases, these circumstances produce a program of career development instruction and guidance that is insufficient to meet students' needs and may leave them even more frustrated about career decision making.

The problem for service deliverers. As noted above, many career development course instructors at the university level may have little or no interest or expertise in career development techniques. However, those who do, may be discouraged by a lack of understanding of what makes for a good career exploration and planning course. Although numerous studies have found that career courses are beneficial to students (see Folsom & Reardon, 2003), little is known about the reason that the courses are beneficial (Jurgens, 2000). In their review of literature related to career course outcomes and outputs, Folsom and Reardon reported that "…there is evidence that career courses have a positive impact on the cognitive functioning of students in several areas, and these courses also appear to have a positive impact on student outcomes, including satisfaction with career courses and increased retention in college" (p. 445). However, in an annual review of the career development literature, Subich (1994) pointed out that process-outcome research in career development has focused more on speculation than on empirical evidence for the effectiveness of career intervention procedures. Several

authors have lamented the shortcomings of career course research, including inadequate descriptions of the counseling interventions, lack of a coherent theoretical basis for interventions, absence of control conditions, variability in operational definitions of concepts, and variability among outcome measures, including many instruments created for specific individual studies (Folsom & Reardon; Lent, Larkin, & Hasegawa, 1986; Remer, O'Neill, & Gohs, 1984; Sepich, 1987). Therefore, even the most ambitious career course instructor may have little better than a trial-and-error approach to constructing a truly effective, beneficial course to aid students in career and academic decision making.

Significance of the Problem

The significance of the problem outlined above to counseling professionals is threefold. First, career and academic decision making presents a considerable challenge to college students. This challenge may perplex students, and in some cases they may seek counseling services to assist with the problem. Most likely the professionals sought will be affiliated with the university's counseling or career centers, although private practice professionals may also interact with students who are somehow frustrated with the decision process. It is important that professionals serving these students are aware of the benefits and problems associated with institutional interventions already in place to help students adapt to their increased responsibility in determining their educational course.

A second reason that the current problem is significant to counseling professionals is that they are often the service deliverers, or are responsible for supervising students who teach the course. Most career exploration programs are offered either by professionals or graduate students in the university's career center, or by

professionals or graduate students in the university's counseling or educational psychology departments (Devlin, 1974; Folsom & Reardon, 2003). As noted, the course is often assigned to graduate teaching assistants whose knowledge base and interest in career development may be limited. Whether novice instructors or seasoned professors, these professionals have a duty to strive to improve upon existing services and provide the optimal level of benefit for their students. They can no doubt benefit from increased knowledge of best practices in a career planning course.

Finally, the current problem is relevant to career professionals because of a professional commitment to advocacy. Understanding the components of a career planning course for college students that produce the most beneficial outcomes and outputs will make discussions with administrators more productive and may lead to increased attention to this important device for aiding students' career decision making.

Purposes of the Study

There were three main purposes of the current study. There is some evidence from meta-analytic studies that career interventions are most effective when activities include five components deemed critical to improved outcomes (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Brown et al., 2003). These components include workbooks and written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, in-session occupational information exploration, modeling, and support building (Brown et al.). To date, no studies have assessed the impact of purposely incorporating these five components in an introductory college career course. The first purpose of the current study was to purposefully infuse these five components into a career planning course for college students, and to assess the outcomes related to students' career decidedness, career indecision, their confidence that

they can make effective career and academic planning decisions, and their thoughts about career decision making.

A second purpose of the study was to compare the effectiveness of two different approaches to a career planning course, the Critical Components Course format, which includes the purposeful use of the five components suggested by Brown et al. (2003), and the standard introductory career planning course format already in place at a major southeastern university, in increasing students' career decidedness, decreasing their career indecision, increasing their career decision making self-efficacy, and reducing their negative career thoughts. While some of the critical components may be included in the Standard Course format, the Standard Course was not designed to intentionally include these components.

The final purpose of the study was to examine student characteristics that may influence receptiveness to a career planning intervention. Multiple studies have examined factors leading to career indecision in college students. Several authors have suggested that a diagnosis or typology of indecision may be effective in determining the most effective intervention strategies to use with a particular individual or group of individuals (e.g., Gordon, 1998; Jones, 1999). Researchers (Gordon, 1998; Larson, Heppner, Ham, & Dugan, 1988) have discussed the movement in career development literature from career indecision as a dichotomous variable to one that involves several factors contributing to career indecision. There is preliminary evidence (Kelly & Pulver, 2003) that students' personality variables as measured by the Five-Factor model of personality (e.g., Digman, 1990) impact their level of career decidedness, as well as their ability to benefit from a career course intervention. However, the study providing this evidence did not assess

career decidedness of individuals before and after the intervention using the same measure of indecision/decidedness. Therefore, it is uncertain whether student indecision types, classified in part by personality variables, are in fact predictive of career course outcomes.

Demographic and personality variables were assessed in the present study prior to beginning the course and were matched with students' outcomes in career decidedness, career indecision, presence of negative career thoughts, and career decision making self efficacy. These results inform counseling professionals about the suitability of a career planning course for students with whom they interact.

Research Questions

Three main research questions reflect the three purposes of the present study:

1. Are there significant improvements in career decidedness/indecision as measured by the *Career Decision Scale* (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976), career decision making self-efficacy as measured by the *Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form* (CDSME-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996), and career thoughts as measured by the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (CTI; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996), as a result of students' participation in the Critical Components course?
2. Are there differences between the Critical Components course and the standard career planning course format in the amount of change in students' career decidedness, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts?
3. Do students' demographic and personality variables seem to impact the level of benefit they receive through a career planning course?

Research Hypotheses

The research questions outlined above were the basis for generating the following three sets of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant increases in career decidedness and reductions in career indecision over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 1b. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant increases in career decision making self-efficacy over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 1c. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant decreases in negative career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 2a. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater increases in career decidedness and greater decreases in career indecision than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 2b. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater increases in career decision making self-efficacy than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 2c. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater reductions in the presence of negative career thoughts than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 3a. Students' demographic variables (e.g., gender and ethnicity) will impact the amount of improvement in career decidedness, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 3b. Students' personality variables as measured by the NEO-PI-R will impact the amount of improvement in career decidedness, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Description of Terms

Critical components. Critical components refer to those components of career interventions found by Brown and colleagues (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Brown et al., 2003) as critical to improved client outcomes. The critical components are 1) workbooks and written exercises; 2) individualized assessment interpretations and feedback; 3) accessing career information in-session; 4) modeling; and 5) support.

Critical Components Course. The Critical Components Course is the course designed to include the purposeful infusion of the five components of career interventions outlined as "critical" to improved career development outcomes by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) and Brown et al. (2003).

Standard Course format. The Standard Course format is the course already in place at Auburn University for freshman and sophomore students who are unsure of their academic and/or career direction. Although the Standard Course format may include one or more of the critical components, the Standard Course was not designed purposely to include the critical components.

Critical Components Group. The terms Critical Components Group and treatment group are used to describe participants in the Critical Components Course.

Standard Course Group. The terms Standard Course Group, and control group are used to describe participants in the Standard Course format.

Career certainty. Career certainty is "the degree of certainty that the student feels in having made a decision about a major and a career" (Osipow, 1987, p. 1).

Career decidedness. Career decidedness is "the degree of certainty that the student feels in having made a decision about a major and a career" (Osipow, 1987, p. 1).

Career decision making self-efficacy. Career decision making self-efficacy involves one's beliefs in his or her own capabilities to successfully make decisions regarding career and academic planning.

Career exploration. Career exploration involves "those activities in which individuals seek to assess themselves and acquire information from the environment to assist with the decision-making, job entry, and vocational adjustment processes" (Blustein, 1989, p. 111-112). The terms career exploration and career planning are used interchangeably to describe the process of involvement in career exploration activities.

Career indecision. Career indecision is "a multidimensional state which includes, but is not limited to, being unsure of a college major or future career" (Sepich, 1987, p. 8).

Career planning. Career planning involves engagement in career exploration activities. The term is used interchangeably with career exploration.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a great need for career development interventions designed to facilitate college students' ability to make academic and career decisions. Students entering college are often unprepared to make decisions regarding their future academic and career plans. Colleges and universities have the responsibility to provide career development assistance for these students, but the services offered are too often inadequate to meet students' needs. Career courses designed to assist students in academic and career planning may be arbitrarily designed and implemented with little thought about which interventions will be most beneficial to students. Thus far, the focus has been primarily on undecided college students, or those who are uncertain of academic and vocational plans. However, Goodson (1981) pointed out that choosing a career is typically viewed as a developmental process, which implies that even students who enter the college or university setting with a decided major "…would still need some help to crystallize or amend their career plans" (p. 413).

Thus, it appears that all college students could potentially benefit from assistance with their academic and career planning. This help is offered to college students in several different formats. The format chosen as the focus for this review is the career planning course, an intervention that allows for career education and planning assistance

to be delivered to large numbers of college students, within the context of the educational environment, and for college credit.

The review of the literature will begin with a brief history of career courses and will describe the prevalence of career courses in colleges and universities today. Next, descriptions of career course content and instructional strategies found in the literature will be summarized to give an overview of various course designs and techniques that have been employed in the past. Studies regarding specific characteristics of courses that seem to work best will be described. Research on outcomes and outputs resulting from career course participation will then be reviewed, including studies documenting the overall effectiveness of career courses, the contributions of meta-analyses to our understanding of career course effectiveness, and a summary of research related to specific outcome variables that frequently appear in the literature related to career courses. Finally, the variables of special interest to this study will be reviewed, including career indecision, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts, and studies examining these variables will be presented.

Review of Career Courses

History of the course. Literature related to career courses has a long history and presents multiple considerations in designing and implementing career development courses for college students. Folsom and Reardon (2003) provided an extensive review of literature related to career course outcomes and outputs. In their review, Folsom and Reardon offered a brief history of career development courses in colleges and universities throughout the United States. The authors reported that the use of career development courses originated in colonial times. The course garnered popularity for several decades

until the 1970s, when interest in and prevalence of career development courses for college students burgeoned (Folsom & Reardon).

Prevalence of the course. Folsom and Reardon (2003) outlined several recent surveys conducted to determine the prevalence of a career development course in U. S. colleges and universities. The first survey they reviewed is by Mead and Korschgen (1994), who randomly surveyed two colleges from each state. Their responses included 61 schools, from 32 different states. Respondents reported three different types of career courses being offered: those aimed at career decision making, those specifically designed to assist with the job search process, and those implemented to assist students enrolled in specific academic disciplines. Of the 61 responding schools, 95% offered one to three hours of course credit for the class.

Halasz and Kempton (2000) used an online survey through various listservs used by career professionals to assess the prevalence of career course interventions in colleges and universities. Of the respondents to this survey, 70% of institutions reported offering some kind of career course, and most offered it for one credit.

Course content and instructional strategies. Multiple approaches to a career development course have been described in the literature over the past three decades. Many of the courses described have had similar goals, yet there is still a great degree of variability among the specific learning outcomes envisioned by course designers, the class structure, and the interventions or activities included. Devlin (1974) reported that traditionally there had been three general types of college career courses. One type of course focuses on orienting college juniors and seniors to the world of work and helping them to prepare for the job search. The goals of such courses, according to Devlin,

include assisting students in “crystallizing a career choice and then in relating that choice to organizing a job campaign” (p. 64). A second type of course described by Devlin is a course relating to provision of occupational information. These courses generally provide superficial exposure to multiple career areas or occupations. The final type of course Devlin described is a career dynamics course, “designed to assist the student in developing concrete learning skills which will enable the student to gain insight and understanding into the relationship between self and the world of work” (p. 64). The focus of such courses is on the process, rather than the content. More recent authors (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Folsom, Reardon, & Lee, 2005) have suggested that career courses today still primarily attend to one or a combination of these same three concerns.

Several career courses described in the literature seem to follow a basic format: exposing students to career development theory, helping them learn more about themselves (i.e., interests, abilities, values, and personality), helping them learn more about academic and career options, and decision-making training to assist in matching the self with one or more viable options (e.g., Barker, 1981; Davis & Horne, 1986; Devlin, 1974; Evans & Rector, 1978; Johnson & Smouse, 1993; Lisansky, 1990; Remer, O’Neill, & Gohs, 1984; Ripley, 1975; Wachs, 1986). However, as noted above, there is considerable variability even among courses that reflect similar designs, theoretical underpinnings, and/or interventions. Several unique ideas were discovered among these courses.

Devlin (1974) described the design of a career dynamics course in depth. His course consisted of four stages:

(1) identifying background (i.e., understanding career choice factors, understanding career development as a process, increasing self-knowledge of interests, abilities, and influences, and clarifying personal values)

(2) model building (i.e., producing a hierarchy of needs and developing a model for use in evaluating information)

(3) model application (i.e., evaluating decision making preferences)

(4) occupational exploration (i.e., investigation of the world of work using the model as a framework for understanding options).

Within the stages of the course, several assignments were completed that assisted in meeting the goals of each particular stage. Stage 1 tools included "measurement instruments, such as interest and value inventories; career wheels consisting of case histories, career factor charts, and life style descriptions; and field investigation of work environments" (p. 64, 66). Stage 2 tools included "structured written exercises which focus on the importance of needs as job satisfiers" (p. 66). Stage 3 employed simulation games, case studies, and role-playing. Tools used in Stage 4 included primary resources (e.g., personal interviews, videotapes modeling interview behaviors, etc.) and secondary resources (i.e., educational readings).

With regard to career course development, Devlin (1974) warned: "It should be noted that career speakers are discouraged, since the emphasis is to assist the student in developing a skill in occupational information seeking, rather than exposing the student to various informational resources" (p. 68). This advice offers a helpful introduction to the other articles outlining specific approaches to career course design: multiple theoretical positions and differing educational goals may form the basis for development

of a career development course; therefore, choosing course structure, format, and interventions contingent on these theoretical underpinnings and goals is imperative.

Evans and Rector (1978) examined a course aimed at improving students' career decision making that was similar in design to the one described by Devlin (1974). One unique feature of this course was the authors' emphasis on a lack of pressure placed on course participants to make a final career decision, and a focus on helping students learn about decision making and how to obtain career information, rather than on helping students make a commitment to a particular career area (Evans & Rector, 1978).

Also unique to the course designed by Evans and Rector (1978) was the use of an array of course formats, which included individual assignments, large group meetings of approximately 24 students, and small group meetings involving only six students each. The authors also offered the opportunity for one or more personal conferences with the course instructors.

Davis and Horne (1986) described another multiple-format career course designed to increase career decidedness and maturity. The course met three times a week for 16 weeks. Course format and structure was varied throughout the week, with Monday class sessions focusing on lectures on educational and career topics, Wednesday classes focusing, alternately, on tests on the reading material and guest speakers, and Friday classes being devoted to small group discussion.

Ripley (1975) advocated for the use of large career planning classes in colleges and universities to meet students' growing needs for career and educational guidance. The author described a one credit-hour course that focused on three areas: job, vocation, and leisure. These areas were aimed at facilitating student growth and planning

in three corresponding areas: survival, self-fulfillment, and fun and relaxation, respectively (Ripley). Similar to the course described by Evans and Rector (1978), this course was aimed at helping students increase their self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work, improve their understanding of how to make effective decisions, and learn about the action needed to implement their plans. Course requirements included attendance at eight out of 10 sessions, completion of assignments in the textbook, and interviewing two professionals employed in various fields. This course seemed unique in that it was one of the first courses described that presented the career as a lifestyle (Ripley). Like the course described by Evans and Rector, a major thrust of this course was "encourag[ing] students to be more flexible in their planning" (Ripley, p. 67), and the course did not require commitment to a specific academic or career plan.

Other courses with similar content and emphases have been described in varying degrees of detail in the literature. Barker (1981) described a course developed for freshmen and sophomores that was implemented in 14 colleges across 13 states. Although no descriptions of specific assignments or activities were provided, the author outlined the course goals, which included a goal of career commitment through action, in contrast to other studies (e.g., Evans & Rector, 1978; Ripley, 1975).

Johnson, Smither, and Holland (1981) described another similar career development seminar offered at Johns Hopkins University over a period of five years. Participants attended 30 sessions lasting 50 minutes each over the course of three months. Students completed approximately 15 exercises and engaged in out-of-class activities including talking to people about their careers and reviewing career exploration resources (Johnson et al.).

Smith (1981) compared the effectiveness of two different teaching methods for an introductory career course aimed at increasing students' career maturity. Both courses were offered for two hours of course credit. The courses varied in degree of structure and timing of introduction of the world of work relative to self-exploration. Smith's findings suggested that structure may be especially important in career course design, and that more structure may be better than less. Poole (1983) also varied career course design in terms of environmental structure, including instructor behavior, course content, room size, and instructional methods.

In addition to the variation in instructional methods, environmental variables, and course structure, a host of theoretical positions have been used to develop career courses. In their survey of college career service deliverers, Halasz and Kempton (2000) found that most career courses included some reference to John Holland's RIASEC model of career development. The authors also reported that respondents mentioned a variety of other theorists as being influential in designing their career courses, including Super, Krumboltz, Bandura, and Jung (Halasz & Kempton). Several respondents to Halasz and Kempton's survey described a general approach to career development, including "self-assessment, career exploration, and decision making skills" (p. 163), although they did not indicate any specific theoretical positions. According to Halasz and Kempton, some career professionals in their survey were unsure about the theoretical basis for their career courses, and others indicated that they had "no real basis" (p. 163) for their career course.

While many career courses may be founded on the same theoretical (or, perhaps, atheoretical) base, some career courses described in the literature have very different theoretical perspectives and goals from those previously described. For example, Bradley

and Mims (1992) described a course based heavily in Adlerian theory and a family systems approach. In their class, family was the basis for beginning the self-exploration process. Course formats varied to include lectures, independent assignments, and small- and large-group meetings. Students completed activities including a vocational genogram and a list of people to whom they could turn for help in making decisions. The idea was to help students understand the impact of family of origin on their own career choices and strivings.

Stonewater and Daniels (1983) applied Chickering's (1969) developmental theory to the design of their career course. Interventions were aimed at helping students develop a greater degree of autonomy, an improved sense of purpose, and greater freedom in their interpersonal relationships. Activities included ranking life goals, examining values, needs, priorities, and social perspectives, and helping students model less-dependent decision making styles.

Peng (2001) described two different theoretical approaches to a career course: one based on cognitive theory, and one based on trait-and-factor theory. The cognitive restructuring intervention was more interactive than the trait-and-factor approach, which relied primarily on a traditional class format with the instructor as lecturer.

Lent, Larkin, and Hasegawa (1986) described a focused interest career course designed specifically for students interested in engineering and sciences. The class, which met for 10 weeks and yielded two course credits, included many of the same activities as other courses described: a general orientation to career planning and development, vocational self-assessment activities, exploration of career information, and decision-making skills. The difference in this course was that it was geared toward individuals

whose primary vocational interests are in the Realistic and Investigative areas. The course was designed with characteristics of individuals having these interests in mind, so that assignments were geared more specifically to their learning and social interaction styles.

A final course that has been carefully described in multiple publications and that has a long, rich history in the research literature is the course offered by career development professionals at Florida State University (Folsom, 2000; Folsom, Reardon, & Lee, 2005; Reardon & Regan, 1981; Reed, Reardon, Lenz, & Leierer, 2001; Vernick, Reardon, & Sampson, 2004). This particular course has been chronicled for over two decades. It began as a career planning course divided into three units: Self and Environmental Analysis, Decision-Making, and Job Acquisition (Reardon & Regan). Since the course is offered for variable credit, students have the option to participate in all three modules, or to take only one or two. Over the years, the course has evolved into one that follows a particular theory of career development, Cognitive Information Processing Theory, and that employs a manualized approach to the course intervention (Lulgjuraj, Ruff, & Cummings, 2006; Reed et al.).

In outlining the updated course design, Reed et al. (2001) describe basically the same three stages, or units, as those described by Reardon and Regan (1981). Unit one, Career Concepts and Applications involves activities designed to increase students' self-knowledge, knowledge of options, and decision making strategies, and involves development of an individual action plan, writing a career autobiography, completing interest and skills assessments, using computer-assisted career guidance systems, and writing an occupational research paper. Unit two, Social Conditions Affecting Career

Development, addresses social, economic, family, and organizational changes affecting the career planning process, and emphasizes the need for students to develop more complex approaches to conceptualizing career problems. Unit three attends to employability skills and strategies for implementing academic and career plans, and involves completion of two interviews with employed individuals in fields of interest, completion of a resume and cover letter, and composition of a final paper integrating progress throughout the course. The course is taught by a lead instructor and co-instructors, and has an instructor-student ratio of approximately 1:8-12. The present-day course has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing students' negative career thoughts.

Which interventions work best? Several studies have compared outputs and outcomes resulting from multiple approaches to a career course. Smith (1981) compared courses based on structure. One class received more structured activities and written assignments than the other, and received an overview of the world of work prior to beginning any self-exploration. The other class received a more flexible, workbook-style approach to the class and began self-exploration before eventually applying their self-knowledge to world of work information. Smith found that the class that received the more structured activities experienced increases in career maturity relative to both the less-structured class and a control group.

In their investigation of students' responses to a career course, Vernick, Reardon, and Sampson (2004) found that course sections meeting only once per week received lower student ratings than course sections meeting multiple times per week. The authors suggested, "It is likely that students in course sections meeting one day per week were overwhelmed with information from a two hour and forty minute class and did not have

adequate time to reflect and assimilate what they learned about one topic before another topic was started" (p. 211). This finding provides valuable insight into another consideration of course design: if class meetings are to be held only once per week, it is important to structure the topic areas covered and class activities so that they will not be overwhelming to students.

Peng (2001) compared the effectiveness of two approaches to a career course with college students in Taiwan. Two classes were set up: one based on cognitive theory, which involved class interaction with the instructor as facilitator, small group discussions and activities, individual assessments and exercises, lectures, readings, student presentations, writing, hands-on work observation, and class participation; the other based on trait-and-factor theory, involving a traditional class format with instructor as lecturer, completion of psychological tests, and exposure to trait-and-factor theory. Peng found no significant differences in career decision or indecisiveness as measured by the *Career Decision Scale* (CDS) between the two approaches to a career class. There were significant differences between both class groups (Cognitive Restructuring and Career Decision-making Skills) and the control group on career decision and indecisiveness. These results echo others (e.g., Davis & Horne, 1986; Peng & Herr, 1999) that have indicated little difference among career interventions in terms of outputs and outcomes.

A central theme throughout the career course literature is the use of career exploration as a major component of many college career courses. Blustein (1989) discussed the role of career exploration in college students' decision making. He reviewed research to support the idea of using career exploration to develop congruent occupational preferences, vocational maturity, confidence in one's vocational choices,

and adaptive job-seeking behaviors (Blustein, p. 112). In his study of college students, Blustein found that two career exploration variables, environmental exploration and self-exploration, accounted for 20.6% of the variance in vocational planning and commitment. The author also found, interestingly, that students' personal beliefs that self-exploration is helpful were inversely related to vocational commitment, suggesting that some students may be intuitively aware of the process, rather than the product, that is career development.

In their focused interest career course designed for students interested in science and engineering, Lent, Larkin, and Hasegawa (1986) found that the course was "effective in facilitating students' career planning," and that, "Students in the course reported significantly less posttest indecision than the quasicontrol group on the CDS" (p. 156). Participants in their study also had higher posttest scores on "self-appraisal in relation to careers, knowledge of career information, and vocational information-seeking behavior" (Lent et al., p. 156). However, the authors concluded that their results "do not prove that this approach is superior to the typical college career course comprised of students with more heterogeneous vocational interests" (p. 157), and that "tests of comparative effectiveness seem warranted" (p. 158).

In their process evaluation of a career course, Reardon and Regan (1981) assessed students' priorities in terms of course outcome goals. They report the following prioritized list (Reardon & Regan, p. 268):

1. To increase personal motivation for career planning.
2. To better understand the important variables in career planning.
3. To learn about career decision-making processes.

4. To identify nonuniversity experiences important in career planning.
5. To become familiar with labor market forecasts.
6. To locate information about occupations
7. To better understand the relationship between majors and jobs.

These findings can be useful in designing a career course. It seems that student priorities center on personalizing the career decision process and learning more about options. These two goals have regularly been incorporated into career classes; however, there is still little research to define best practices within this set of goals.

The Critical Components approach. One particularly helpful recent addition to the literature related to career intervention design and outcome has been the work of Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) and Brown and colleagues (2003) involving meta-analyses of the ingredients career development professionals use in assisting undecided clients. Brown and Ryan Krane concluded on the basis of meta-analysis that five intervention components seem to produce improved outcomes in career development interventions of all kinds, including career courses.

The first critical component of career interventions described by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) and Brown et al. (2003) involves the use of workbooks and written exercises. In interpreting their results for application among counseling professionals, Brown and colleagues offered specific suggestions for the use of such exercises. One specific suggestion was that students/clients commit their goals and plans to writing near the end of the career intervention. Another suggestion was that career interventions for undecided individuals employ written materials related to both comparing occupations

and planning for the future rather than just incorporating exercises to address one of these two variables.

The second critical component described by the authors (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Brown et al., 2003) involves providing undecided individuals with individualized interpretations and feedback about their future goals and plans, and about the results of assessments they complete as part of the intervention. Specifically, the authors suggest that counselors engage clients in future planning following the use of computer-guided interventions; that counselors have clients write down their goals and plans as a result of using computer interventions, and that counselors provide individualized feedback on these plans and on assessment results in order to improve client outcomes (Brown et al.).

A third critical component described by the authors (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Brown et al., 2003) involves participating in career exploration activities, including the use of career library materials, visits from guest speakers and panels, and the use of a learning about occupations computer module. The authors suggested that outcomes will be greater for clients who receive more than just an in-session introduction to career information resources, but who are allowed to explore occupations and academic options within the session (Brown et al.). Writing is central to this component as well.

The fourth critical component in career development interventions is modeling. The authors (Brown et al., 2003) suggested that facilitator self-disclosures may be instrumental; additionally, the use of guest speakers and out-of-session experiences that expose clients to effective career models can be beneficial. With regard to the appropriateness of models, Brown and colleagues indicated that models are more

effective when they are perceived by participants as being similar to themselves, and when they display evidence of having made a successful career decision.

The final critical component of career development interventions involves support. One consideration clients need to be aware of is the degree of support they will receive from significant others as a result of making various choices (Brown et al., 2003). Additionally, the authors assert that clients need to learn how to develop new sources of support, especially for choices that will not result in an outpouring of support from the current social network.

To summarize the findings of best practices for a career development course, it seems that, while knowledge may be limited, there is some degree of consensus regarding certain aspects of career course planning. First, it seems that structured approaches to the course may be more effective than unstructured approaches (Smith, 1981). Second, career courses should be designed to meet multiple times per week, or should be limited with regard to exposure to materials and activities so as not to overwhelm the student (Vernick, et al., 2004). A third finding relevant to designing and implementing a career course is the necessity of career exploration in assisting career course students (Blustein, 1989). Finally, it appears that five intervention components (i.e., written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, in-session occupational exploration, modeling, and support) are especially key to any career intervention, including a career course, and that inclusion of these five components will yield improved outcomes over courses not employing these components (Brown et al., 2003).

Experimental Findings: Career Course Outputs and Outcomes

In their review of the literature related to career courses, Folsom and Reardon (2003) differentiated between the output data of career courses and the outcome data. The authors classified outputs as "skills, knowledge, and attitudes acquired by participants as a result of an intervention" (Folsom & Reardon, p. 427). Examples of outputs include career decision making self-efficacy, career maturity, increased career decidedness, and an increase in the presence of positive career-planning thoughts (Folsom & Reardon). Outcomes are classified as "resultant effects occurring at some later point in time," and include "course satisfaction, deciding on a major, and timely graduation from college" (Folsom & Reardon, p., 427). The authors reported that 46 studies in their review reported outcome and output data. The authors provided an extensive summary of these outcomes and outputs spanning from 1976 to 2001 (Folsom & Reardon, pp. 428-433). The authors and their colleague (Folsom, Reardon,& Lee, 2005) provided an online update to their original summary. Even a cursory examination of these summaries clarifies the diverse approaches to evaluating career courses that have been employed over the last three decades.

Studies of overall effectiveness. In their latest review of career course studies, Folsom, Reardon, and Lee (2005) covered 50 studies related to career courses. Of the studies reviewed, 36 included a comparison group in the study (Folsom, Reardon, & Lee). Most of the studies (80%) used a pretest-posttest design. Of the 50 studies reviewed, all but three reported significant improvements on one or more outcome variables addressed by the study.

A review of specific positive outcomes of career courses reinforces the evidence provided by Folsom and colleagues in their reviews (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Folsom et al., 2005). In the study previously described, Evans and Rector (1978) found that 73.3% of students in their sample reported being closer to selecting an academic major at completion of the course than they were when they began. Additionally, 70.9% of students reported being closer to selecting an occupation to pursue (Evans & Rector). Barker (1981) assessed students' perceptions of course outcomes at the completion of her course. She reported that 88% of students believed they had a greater understanding of themselves, 87% believed they had a greater understanding of the world of work, 84% felt they had developed a career plan that considered both personal and environmental variables, and 81% reported increased awareness of a career goal and its appropriateness to them (Barker). She also reported that students who completed the course gained significantly in progress in selecting a college major, progress in selecting an occupation, knowledge about college majors and the relationship between majors and occupations, knowledge about occupations of interest and an understanding of the self in relation to work, quality of decision-making processes and belief in one's ability to make decisions, and accuracy of world-of-work knowledge.

In her study of a large career planning class, Ripley (1975) reported that students rated the course quality (64%), personal interaction (71%) and long-range value (64%) positively. Reardon and Regan (1981) completed a process evaluation of the career course offered by Florida State University. The authors reported that students believed they devoted the same amount of time and energy to the career course as they did to other university courses, but perceived more student-instructor interaction within this course

and were more receptive to the organization of course materials and class presentations in the career course than in other university courses (Reardon & Regan). In a replication of this study, Vernick, Reardon, and Sampson (2004) reported that, as compared with other university courses, students rated the career course higher on student-instructor interaction, course demands, and level of course organization.

The contribution of meta-analyses. Spokane and Oliver (1983) examined the outcomes of a variety of vocational interventions, including career courses, using a meta-analysis. In this analysis, Spokane and Oliver measured effect sizes for the combined treatment methods of group interventions and class interventions, so generalizing results specifically to class interventions may be misleading. However, the authors reported that, "The outcome status of the average client receiving group/class vocational interventions exceeded that of 87% of untreated controls" (p. 118). Additionally, Spokane and Oliver reported larger effect sizes for group/class treatments than for all other treatments combined.

In a follow-up to their original meta-analysis, Oliver and Spokane (1988) conducted a second meta-analysis in which they differentiated between group and class treatments, making class treatments its own category. The authors reported that, of all treatment modalities reviewed (including individual counseling, individual test interpretation, group counseling, group test interpretation, workshops and structured groups, classes, computer-based interventions, and counselor-free interventions), the largest effect sizes were associated with classes. The authors also indicated that class interventions consisted of the largest numbers of hours of treatment, and suggested that,

"increasing the number of hours or of sessions for an intervention increases the favorability of the outcome" (p. 459).

Hardesty (1991) provided more evidence of the effectiveness of career courses in a meta-analysis examining career maturity and career decidedness. He reported: "The weighted mean effect size for the improvements of experimental groups over control groups was .44 for maturity and .36 for decidedness" (p. 185). Hardesty concluded, "The results of these meta-analyses confirm the effectiveness of undergraduate career courses offered for credit. There was improvement in all measures of career outcomes" (p. 185).

A final meta-analysis reviewed here was conducted by Whiston, Sexton, and Lasoff (1998) as a replication of Oliver and Spokane's (1988) meta-analysis. Although Whiston et al. did not find career courses to produce the largest effect size, as their predecessors found, their data indicate that career classes are one of the least expensive and most effective career interventions available. The average effect per session of career classes was reported at 0.16, behind only two other interventions: computer-based interventions (0.23) and individual career counseling (0.92). Whiston and her colleagues also cautioned that studies included in their meta-analysis consisted of different proportions of interventions than did those included in Oliver and Spokane's meta-analysis. In fact, Whiston et al.'s effect sizes were calculated based on only three studies of individual counseling, as opposed to nine studies of career class interventions.

The use of specific measures. These studies provide preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of career courses. However, as noted previously, not only the course design and content, but also the measurement instruments used to assess the courses, have varied tremendously among studies. Folsom, Reardon, and Lee (2005) presented a summary of

the instruments used in the studies they reviewed. There is considerable variability among the instruments chosen, with a few exceptions. Four outcome measures were consistently used by researchers whose studies were included in Folsom, Reardon, and Lee's summary: *The Career Maturity Inventory* (CMI; Crites, 1973), *the Career Decision Scale* (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al., 1976), *My Vocational Situation* (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), and academic records.

With regard to career maturity, of seven studies reviewed by Folsom et al. (2005), five reported positive results (i.e., increased career maturity) following completion of a career course. Concerning career decidedness and indecision, 12 studies used the CDS as an outcome measure, and 10 of the 12 reported positive results following completion of a career course (i.e., increased career decidedness/certainty, or decreased career indecision, or both). Seven studies reviewed by Folsom et al. used *My Vocational Situation* (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980) to assess students' levels of vocational identity. All seven studies reported positive results (i.e., increases in vocational identity). Four studies reviewed by Folsom et al. used academic records as outcome variables. Of these studies, two reported an increase in the graduation rate of students who participated in a career course, and one reported an increase in student retention as a result of the course (Folsom, et al.).

Other general findings regarding the effectiveness of career courses include an early study by Adams (1974), who assessed participants in a career course relative to factors leading to retention in a community college setting. He found that students in a career and academic planning course performed at a higher academic level, were more confident about their ability to complete their chosen program of study, were more

satisfied with their course of study, and were "making more appropriate educational/vocational choices" than students in the control group (Adams, p. 32).

Variables of Particular Interest in the Current Study

It is evident that research examining interventions aimed at assisting college students in their career development has covered substantial ground. Clearly, different researchers and career theorists bring a multitude of differing perspectives on what is important to college students' career development to the literature. Because of the overwhelming nature of compiling, synthesizing, and analyzing all of this information, the current review of the literature focuses on the outcome variables of interest to the present study.

Career indecision. The research on career indecision has a fairly sound history. According to Larson, Heppner, Ham, and Dugan (1988), "Counseling psychologists have long been attending to vocational concerns of college students, particularly vocational indecision" (p. 439). Several studies have been completed using career indecision as an outcome variable, and authors have discussed in-depth the multitude of possible antecedents of career indecision. Ginn (1973/74) suggested several possible reasons for college students' career indecision: (1) difficulty making a decision with the limited amount of data about work alternatives and what they would entail; (2) fear of personal and professional options becoming too limiting or circumscribed; (3) a dislike for the options to which the student has been exposed. Additionally, Ginn commented, "Students fear the lack of mobility they think is intrinsic in most work" (p. 45), and cautioned, "…there is a tendency to consider such career choices irreversible, and the choice of a career is viewed as something of a marriage contract" (p. 45). It is no wonder, given these

concerns, that many students find it difficult to make academic and career decisions. However, there may be multiple additional factors underlying each individual student's propensity to engage in career exploration and make career decisions.

Several authors have suggested that a "diagnosis" or typology of indecision may be effective in determining the most effective intervention strategies to use with a particular individual or group of individuals (e.g., Gordon, 1998; Jones, 1999). Researchers (Gordon; Larson et al., 1988) have discussed the movement in career development literature from career indecision as a dichotomous variable to one that involves several factors contributing to career indecision. In comparing "decided" and "undecided" students, Goodson found that "Declared" students, in general, had made more progress toward choosing a major than toward deciding a career. Goodson also reported that "declared" students in education, nursing, and fine arts had made more progress toward choosing a future career, and thus needed less career development assistance, than students in other areas of study. Undeclared students in Goodson's study who were enrolled in liberal arts, physical and math science, and engineering and technology "were the least developed as a group in deciding about their future, and these students expressed the greatest need for assistance, especially toward choosing an occupation" (p. 416).

Goodson (1981) concluded, "The results of the survey reveal that there are many students in colleges with both declared majors and undeclared majors who expressed a need for career assistance" (p. 416). Goodson went on to report that most of the students with declared majors needed more detailed information on the few options they were

considering, while other students needed help making decisions, learning about the opportunities that were available, and increasing their self-knowledge.

Larson and colleagues (1988) performed a cluster analysis to determine which traits influential to career indecision seem to group together. Their analysis identified four clusters of "undecided" students: (1) "planless avoiders," or students who reported the most antecedents of career indecision, who viewed their own problem-solving capabilities negatively, and who were least informed about career-planning activities; (2) "informed indecisives," or students who had a great deal of career information and reported the fewest number of antecedents of career indecision, but whose confidence in their ability to effectively solve problems was low; (3) "confident but uninformed," or students who were confident in their problem-solving abilities, but who lacked career information; and (4) "uninformed," or students who lacked career information and had only moderate perceptions of their own problem-solving abilities (Larson et al., p.441).

Larson et al. (1988) also reported interesting findings regarding differences between decided and undecided students in their study. The authors reported that undecided students endorsed more antecedents of career indecision on the CDS than did decided students; that undecided students perceived themselves as less effective problem-solvers than decided students; and that undecided students acknowledged more problem-solving deficits, more career myths, more pressure to make a career decision, less confidence in their ability to perform academically, lower knowledge of the world of work, and more career obstacles than did the decided students (p. 441).

Larson and colleagues (1988) concluded that, "The results suggest that career indecision may reflect more than simply tension and anxiety…and involve a variety of

combinations of career-planning and personality variables" (p. 443). The authors suggested that students identified in their study as both confident uninformed and uninformed "may respond well to career-planning interventions" (p. 444).

Gordon (1998) provided a review of the literature relative to different types of career indecision. She reported that most studies designed to examine differences between undecided and decided students have reported few significant differences between the two groups. Gordon found 12 studies involving college students and research on career decidedness, and concluded that the following decision statuses emerged: very decided, somewhat decided, unstable decided, tentatively undecided, developmentally undecided, seriously undecided, and chronically indecisive. Obviously, there are problems with operationally defining decision types, though several additional researchers (e.g., Fuqua, Blum, & Hartman, 1988; Kelly & Pulver, 2003; Lucas & Epperson, 1990; Newman & Fuqua, 1990; Wanberg & Muchinsky, 1992) have attempted to delineate and define specific indecision types as well. In a session at the 2006 National Career Development Association conference, Krumboltz presented a list of approximately two dozen descriptors used to identify indecision types. Viewing and hearing this list of descriptors offered comedic clarification that career development researchers and practitioners have fallen short in classifying types of undecided individuals. The usefulness of these classifications seems limited, and, in some cases, even damaging.

For the purposes of the current study, the literature related to indecision types can be beneficial in its provision of insights into the personality variables that may be related to career indecision. Kelly and Pulver (2003) assessed students' career indecision types

using several measures, including the *NEO-FFI* (Costa & McCrae, 1992), a shortened form of the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO instruments are based on the "Big Five" model of personality (e.g., Digman, 1990), measuring five different discrete personality factors: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

Within the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992), the five personality factors measured reflect unique aspects of an individual's overall personality. Neuroticism is "the most pervasive domain of personality," and reflects a contrast between "adjustment or emotional stability" and "maladjustment" (Costa & McCrae, p. 14). Neuroticism consists of an individual's propensity to experience negative affects (e.g., fear, guilt, sadness, and anger).

Extraversion refers to an individual's propensity to be social, to like excitement and stimulation, and to be cheerful (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Openness to Experience refers to "active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, intellectual curiosity, and independence of judgment" (Costa & McCrae, p. 15). Agreeableness measures interpersonal tendencies to include the degree to which an individual is altruistic and sympathetic to others. Finally, Conscientiousness refers to an individual's ability to exert self-control and engage in planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks.

In their study, Kelly and Pulver (2003) used a career exploration class as an intervention with college students. The course was designed, as many of those previously discussed, to help students increase their self-knowledge and knowledge of career options, as well as to teach decision-making strategies. The purpose of their study was to

differentiate among different career indecision types, as well as to determine the impact of a career exploration course on students having different indecision types.

Kelly and Pulver (2003) identified four different career decision types, which will be summarized here. The well-adjusted information seekers in Kelly and Pulver's study were identified as students who have a great need for career information and self-knowledge, but whose Neuroticism scores are low, and who have strong math and verbal abilities as measured by their SAT scores. Kelly and Pulver indicated that, "these students have reason to think they will be successful in their chosen academic field" (p. 451). The second type is comprised of the neurotic indecisive information seekers. These students had high scores on career choice anxiety, general indecisiveness, need for career information, need for self-knowledge, and Neuroticism. Additionally, these students scored lower than the mean on Extraversion, which may be especially important because, according to Kelly and Pulver, introverts "may be less likely to attempt activities that can provide important information about skills and interests and lead to the development of the vocational identity" (p. 451).

The third group identified in Kelly and Pulver's (2003) study included the low-ability information seekers. These students had a great need for career information and self-knowledge, and had high Extraversion scores. However, these students' previous academic performance as measured by their SAT scores was low, and they also scored low on Openness. Kelly and Pulver concluded that these students' great need for information about self and options may be related to their lower ability levels. The final group was comprised of the uncommitted extraverts. These students seemed to need to increase their knowledge of the self less than the other groups. They obtained high scores

on both Extraversion and Agreeableness, and lower scores on Neuroticism as measured by the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1991).

With regard to the class intervention employed by Kelly and Pulver (2003), well-adjusted information seekers and uncommitted extraverts earned the lowest posttest scores for indecision as measured by the CDS (Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al., 1976). The neurotic-indecisive information seekers and the low-ability information seekers earned the highest levels of posttest indecision following completion of the course (Kelly & Pulver). However, it is impossible to tell which groups improved the most, because pretest measures of the CDS (Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al.) were not collected. It is possible that some groups, due to differences in personality factors, may be more receptive to a career course intervention than are other groups. It is also possible that the groups who ended the course with the lowest levels of indecision also began the course with the lowest levels of indecision.

Kelly and Pulver (2003) offered some recommendations for career counseling on the basis of their results. The authors suggested that neurotic indecisive information seekers may benefit most from receiving more tools and resources for career exploration, instruction on decision making, encouragement to explore career interests through courses and nonacademic activities, and assistance in stabilizing their anxiety during the career exploration and decision making process. For the low-ability information seekers, Kelly and Pulver recommended that counselors help students identify viable academic and career options. The well-adjusted information seekers may benefit from brief, information-oriented career counseling interventions, and experiential activities including job shadowing and informational interviewing (Kelly & Pulver). The authors suggested

that this group may benefit especially from the use of internet-based assessment tools. Finally, for the uncommitted extraverts, Kelly and Pulver suggested focusing on identifying steps that are necessary to turn decisions into commitments and to explore and attempt to resolve barriers to making career decisions.

In summary, it seems that Kelly and Pulver's (2003)delineation of different career decision types identified three groups who need to focus on increasing self-knowledge and knowledge of options. Within these three groups, there were personality variables (e.g., Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness) that seemed to impact students' specific needs. Only one group (the uncommitted extraverts) seemed not to need the same level of self-knowledge improvement as the other student groups. It seems possible, then, that some students by their very nature are more receptive to career course interventions than other students. Also, it seems that not every student enrolled in a career course will respond to every intervention. However, the career course format offers the opportunity to expose students to a diverse array of activities and interventions. With the suggestions from Kelly and Pulver in mind, it seems, then, that designing a career course to meet the needs of students presenting with multiple types of career indecision is possible.

Career decision making self-efficacy. Another variable that has received considerable attention in the literature that is of particular interest to the present study is career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE). Originally adapted from Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy to explain gender differences in the pursuit of traditional and nontraditional careers (Hackett & Betz, 1981), career decision-making self-efficacy has become a central construct in career development outcome research involving both

men and women. Career decision making self-efficacy is a measure of one's beliefs in his or her ability to make effective career decisions.

Betz (2004) provided a thorough review of the evolution of self-efficacy theory as it relates to career counseling. She stated that "low self-efficacy expectations regarding a behavior or behavioral domain" [e.g., career decision making] "are postulated to lead to avoidance of those behaviors, poorer performance of those behaviors, and a tendency to 'give up' when faced with discouragement or failure" (pp. 341-342). She also indicated that "low efficacy expectations may be accompanied by negative self-talk or anxiety responses, which interfere with focus on the task at hand and thus impair performance" (p. 342). Betz emphasized the contribution of career decision making self-efficacy to career development by stating, "the effects of self-efficacy on persistence are essential for long-term pursuit of one's goals in the face of obstacles, occasional failures, and dissuading messages from the environment" (p. 342).

Numerous studies have investigated the impact of career decision making self-efficacy on career decision and development. Originally, Betz and Hackett (1981) found that students' beliefs about their academic and career-related capabilities were significantly related to the range of career options they considered. Subsequent studies (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Taylor & Betz, 1983; Taylor & Popma, 1990) suggest that career decision making self-efficacy is a major predictor of career indecision.

Evidence has also been presented that the role of career decision making self-efficacy is different for different populations. In their study of college students, Betz and Voyten (1997) found higher correlations between career decision making self-efficacy and outcome expectations for men than for women. The authors also found that "higher

levels of career decision making self-efficacy are generally positively related to exploratory intentions and are related to lower levels of indecision" (p. 184). In a multiple regression analysis measuring the impact of career decision making self-efficacy, academic outcome expectations, and career outcome expectations on career indecision as measured by the CDS (Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al., 1976), Betz and Voyten reported that career decision making self-efficacy was the significant predictor, accounting for nearly 19% of the variance in women's career indecision, and 29% of the variance in men.

In a study assessing differences in career decision making self-efficacy among various racial/ethnic groups and among declared and undeclared students, Gloria and Hird (1999) found that undeclared students had lower levels of career decision making self-efficacy and higher trait anxiety than declared students. With regard to racial/ethnic differences, the authors also reported that racial/ethnic minority students had lower career decision making self-efficacy than did Caucasian students (Gloria & Hird). Additionally, Gloria and Hird found that ethnic variables explained a larger percentage of the variance in career decision making self-efficacy in racial/ethnic minority students than in Caucasian students.

In a recent study, Paulsen and Betz (2004) reviewed literature supporting the idea that "…there is ample evidence that career decision making self-efficacy is inversely related to career indecision" (p. 354). Among the evidence cited are studies finding that career decision making self-efficacy is related to higher levels of vocational identity, more adaptive career beliefs, increased career exploratory behavior, academic persistence, and academic and social integration in college students (Paulsen & Betz). In

their study, Paulsen and Betz further revealed a relationship between career decision making self-efficacy and self-efficacy "as it relates to the basic competencies required of the typical liberal arts education" (p. 355). The authors assessed students' confidence in their leadership, cultural sensitivity, mathematics, science, using technology, and writing abilities. Paulsen and Betz reported that students' confidence on these six factors accounted for 49% of the variance in career decision making self-efficacy. There were differences by gender and by racial/ethnic group: the six factors seemed most predictive for African Americans (79% of the variance) and men (56% of the variance); however they still predicted a large portion of the variance in women (44%) and European Americans (46%) with regard to career decision making self-efficacy (Paulsen & Betz, 2004). Confidence in leadership ability was the largest predictor of career decision making self-efficacy in all groups.

Another recent study was conducted to examine factors influencing career decision making self-efficacy in nontraditional (i.e., over 25 years old) college women (Quimby & O'Brien, 2004). Career barriers, including sex discrimination, multiple role conflict, dissatisfaction with careers, etc., accounted for 17% of the variance in career decision making self-efficacy among the 354 nontraditional female college students in the sample (Quimby & O'Brien). Social support explained another 15% of the variance in this sample, with unique variance explained by two sources of social support: reassurance of worth and opportunity for nurturance (Quimby & O'Brien). These findings point to the importance of assessing the presence of both career barriers and social support among undecided individuals, particularly those who evidence lower levels of career decision making self-efficacy.

Betz (2004) offered helpful advice for working to help improve clients' career decision making self-efficacy. She suggested that the first step is to help the client/student explore his or her belief in his or her ability to competently make career decision, to assess the self-imposed limitations already in place with the client, and to focus on the causes of the perceptions that led to the enforcement of those limitations. The second step of this process involves allowing clients to pursue opportunities or experience modeling in areas in which they have low efficacy. Relaxation training and self-talk tracking are employed during this process, and the counselor serves as a cheerleader to offer encouragement and support (Betz).

Career thoughts. Career thoughts are defined as "outcomes of one's thinking about assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, feelings, plans, and/or strategies related career problem solving and decision making" (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996, p. 2). Sampson et al. devised the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (CTI) to assess the presence of career thoughts in three dimensions: Decision Making Confusion (DMC), an inability to start or persist with the career decision-making process due to impairing emotions, a lack of knowledge, or both; Commitment Anxiety (CA), an inability to commit to a career choice coupled with generalized anxiety about the impact of making a career decision; and External Conflict (EC), negative thinking regarding balancing one's self-perceptions with significant others' perceptions related to making career choices (Sampson et al.).

A study by Reed, Reardon, Lenz, and Leierer (2001) examined the impact of a career course intervention on college students' career thoughts using the CTI (Sampson et al., 1996). The authors found that the career course was effective in reducing students'

negative career thoughts, and that students experienced significant changes within all three facets of the CTI (DMC, CA, and EC) (Reed et al., 2001).Reed and colleagues also divided students into three groups based on their initial CTI scores (i.e., low, medium, and high), and found that there were significant differences among the groups, with the high-level group experiencing the greatest reductions in negative career thoughts, the medium-level group experiencing the second largest reduction in negative career thoughts, and the low-level group experiencing the smallest reduction in negative career thoughts (Reed et al.).

Reed and colleagues (2001) suggested that, “The reduction of negative career thoughts should enable students to become more successful in career decision making and in choosing a major or occupational goal” (p. 165). The authors discussed the idea that negative thinking related to career decision making may lead students to avoid the process, and suggested that uncovering this problem and developing a method for career decision making through a career course may help them get started in or continue the career decision making process (Reed et al.).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in the current study. Participant recruitment, research instruments, and data collection methods are outlined, and hypotheses are presented. Finally, statistical procedures used to test the hypotheses are described.

Participants

Participants in the study were freshman and sophomore students enrolled in one of the three sections of the career exploration and planning course taught by the researcher who agreed to include their data at the conclusion of the semester. Of 65 students enrolled in the three class sections, a total of 52 students consented to participate in the study.

Students enrolled in three sections of the introductory career exploration and planning course at a large southeastern university were invited to participate in the current study. All students completed the assessment instruments on the first class day and received individualized feedback during the semester related to their assessment results. This feedback was administered as part of the instructional process with the goal of helping students increase their self-knowledge. Recruitment consisted of an oral request during the next-to-last class period. The instructor read the following statement:

> I would like your permission to use the data from the instruments you completed this semester to use in an outcome study assessing the effectiveness of this course. I intend to conduct this study as the central work for my dissertation. You have a right to accept or not accept this invitation without penalty of any kind, including any implications for your grade in this course. The data will not be connected to your name in any way once all of your instruments have been compiled, and no data will be reviewed for the purposes of the outcome study until your final course grades are posted. Please read the Informed Consent form and sign and return it to me at the end of the next class meeting if you are willing to include your data in the study. If you are not willing to include your data in the study, please do not sign the Informed Consent form, but simply return it at the end of the next class meeting unsigned.

The instructor distributed the Informed Consent forms (see Appendix A), which outlined the purpose of the study and reiterated the precautions taken to reduce researcher/instructor bias. Additionally, the forms clearly stated that participants would not be compensated for their participation in the study. The Informed Consent forms were then collected at the last class meeting. Students were instructed to return the forms regardless of whether or not they wished to participate, signing the form if they agreed to include their data in the study and leaving the form blank if they did not. This method was used to prevent the researcher from being able to identify students who did not wish to participate in the study prior to posting course grades, thus eliminating the risk of bias in evaluating students.

Instrumentation

Demographics form. The Demographics form is a six-item measure that asked students to report their age, gender, ethnicity, classification (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior or senior), current major, and level of certainty that they would graduate from Auburn University.

NEO-PI-R. The *NEO-PI-R Form S* (Costa & McCrae, 1992) is a self-report personality instrument consisting of 240 statements to which participants respond on a five-point scale. It is based on the Five-Factor Model of personality (FFM; e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1985; Digman, 1990), and consists of five different domains: Neuroticism (N), which "contrasts adjustment or emotional stability with maladjustment or neuroticism" (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 14); Extraversion (E); Openness to Experience (O), which includes "active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, intellectual curiosity, and independence of judgment" (p. 15); Agreeableness (A), which indicates an individual's fundamental degree of altruism and sympathy; and Conscientiousness (C), which indicates individual differences in the process of "planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks" (p. 16).

Hammond (2001) suggested that the FFM is a useful tool in career counseling because of correlations between Extraversion scores and Holland's RIASEC model. Hammond further described the utility of the Five-Factor model in career counseling, stating that the model can "(1) assist the Career Counselor to understand the client's internal experience, (2) provide a context for understanding the client's concerns, (3) aid in anticipating potential difficulties in the course of career counseling, and (4) assist the Career Counselor in developing a practical treatment plan" (p. 159).

The adult normative sample for the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992) consisted of three subsamples: one consisting of 405 men and women in the *Augmented Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging* (ABLSA); one consisting of 329 ABLSA participants who completed the instrument by computer administration; and one group of 1,539 men and women who participated in a national study of job performance. Since the *NEO-PI-R* provides a separate set of norms for college students, the authors also used two college samples, one consisting of 130 Canadian students, and one consisting of 259 students from the southeastern United States (Costa & McCrae). According to the instrument developers, students score "somewhat higher in N, E, and O and somewhat lower in A and C" than adults (Costa & McCrae, p. 43). The college student normative data will be used for the purposes of the present study.

With regard to reliability of the *NEO-PI-R, Form S* (Costa & McCrae, 1992), the authors reported internal consistency coefficient alphas ranging from .86 (A) to .92 (N) for the five factors. Internal consistencies for the facets of each factor range from a relatively low .56 (Tendermindedness, a facet of A) to .81 (Depression, a facet of N). The test authors (Costa & McCrae) referred to one small study assessing test-retest reliability of the NEO-PI scales, reporting reliabilities for the N, E, and O scales of .87, .91, and .86, respectively. Additionally, the authors referred to a longitudinal study of the N, E, and O scales revealing stability coefficients ranging from .68 to .83.

The *NEO-PI-R* authors (Costa & McCrae, 1992) offer information about the validity of both the factor and the facet scales in the instrument's manual. *The NEO-PI-R* factor scales correlate with appropriate corresponding scales on several other instruments, including the Adjective Check List and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form. The *Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form* (CDMSE-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) is a brief version of an earlier instrument designed by Taylor and Betz (1983) to measure individuals' beliefs that they can successfully navigate the tasks that are inherent in career decision making. The CDMSE-SF consists of 25 items representing various career tasks, to which respondents indicate their degree of confidence in their own abilities to complete the tasks on a scale from 0 ("No confidence at all") to 9 ("Complete confidence"). Items include career planning tasks such as "Make a plan of your goals for the next five years," "Determine what your ideal job would be," and "Choose a job that will fit your interests" (Betz et al.). Competencies are arranged to reflect five factors: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, planning for the future, and problem solving.

The normative sample for the CDMSE-SF (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) consisted of 81 male and 103 female college students. Internal consistency reliabilities ranged from .73 (Self-Appraisal) to .83 (Goal Selection), yielding an alpha of .94 for the entire scale (Betz et al.). The CDMSE-SF also correlates well with other related measures, including the Career Decision Scale (CDS). Betz and her colleagues report that correlations between the CDMSE-SF and the CDS for females were -.68 for Certainty and -.63 for Indecision.

Career Decision Scale. The *Career Decision Scale* (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976) is a self-report measure used to assess career certainty and indecision. The instrument consists of two scales: the Indecision Scale, composed of 19 items, of which participants rate 18 on a four-point Likert scale (Osipow, 1987), and

the Certainty Scale, comprised of two items, which "provides a measure of the degree of certainty that the student feels in having made a decision about a major and a career" (Osipow, p. 1). According to the authors, the CDS is appropriate for use with college students.

In terms of reliability, Osipow (1987) reports on two studies examining test-retest reliability of the CDS. One study (Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976) of two samples of college students found retest correlations for the Indecision scale of .90 and .82 for the samples, respectively. Another study (Slaney, Palko-Nonemaker, & Alexander, 1981) examined test-retest reliabilities over a six-week period for both the Indecision scale and the Certainty scale. These results "showed item correlations ranging from .19 to .70, with total *Career Decision Scale* scores yielding a correlation of .70" (Osipow, p. 4). The CDS manual (Osipow) offers evidence of validity in four different types of studies. The scale correlates appropriately with other measures of career decision making and displays reductions in scores as the result of career interventions (Osipow). Sex differences have been found for the CDS, so the manual includes separate normative data for males and females, as well as separate data for high school students, college students, and adults returning to school (Osipow).

Career Thoughts Inventory. The *Career Thoughts Inventory* (CTI; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996) is a 48-item self-report inventory based on Cognitive Information Processing Theory that measures three domains of individuals' thinking about careers. Decision Making Confusion (DMC) measures "the inability to initiate or sustain the decision making process as a result of disabling emotions and/or a lack of understanding about the decision making process itself" (Sampson et al., p. 28).

Commitment Anxiety (CA) measures "the inability to make a commitment to a specific career choice, accompanied by generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision making process" (p. 28). External Conflict (EC) measures "the inability to balance the importance of one's own self-perceptions with the importance of input from significant others" (p. 29).

Items on the CTI appear in the form of statements to which respondents indicate their level of agreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree). Examples of items on the CTI include, "There are few jobs that have real meaning," "I know what job I want, but someone's always putting obstacles in my way," and "I get upset when people ask me what I want to do with my life" (Sampson et al., 1996).

Normative data for three groups (Adult, College Student, and High School Student) are provided in the CTI manual (Sampson et al., 1996). The college student normative sample group consisted of 344 female and 251 male college students. Internal consistency coefficients are reported in the CTI manual, with coefficient alphas for the CTI total score at .93-.97. Coefficient alphas for the subscales were also reported: DMC (α = .90-.94); CA (α = .79-.91); EC (α = .74-.81). With regard to test-retest reliability, the authors reported stability for the total CTI score at r = .86 for a college student sample. Test-retest reliabilities for the DMC, CA, and EC were .82, .79, and .74, respectively.

The CTI manual (Sampson et al., 1996) presents an extensive table of factor loadings of the CTI with Cognitive Information Processing content dimensions. Convergent validity with *My Vocational Situation* (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), the CDS (Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976), the *Career Decision Profile* (CDP; Jones, 1988) and the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992) are presented. The

authors (Sampson et al.) report appropriate correlations between the items on the CTI and these measures.

Course Evaluation Form. The Course Evaluation Form was developed by the researcher to assess outcomes of the career course formats delivered in the current study. It consists of five total items, including a request that students rank various course activities on the basis of benefit to them, an assessment of the degree to which the course met students' expectations, and degree of certainty about educational decisions. The Course Evaluation Form is included as Appendix C.

Procedures

Students enrolled in the three sections of the introductory career planning course on which the present study was focused completed several measures on the first day of class, including the Demographics form, the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992), the CDMSE-SF (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996), the CDS (Osipow, 1987), and the CTI (Sampson et al., 1996). All students completed these measures, regardless of the section in which they were enrolled, or whether or not they intended to later provide consent to the researcher to include their data in the study. Students' individual assessment results were provided in class to assist them in increasing self-knowledge related to the career planning process. Thus, completion of the assessment instruments benefited all students, including those who chose not to participate in the research study.

Students enrolled in the three researcher-taught sections participated in a variety of individual, group, and experiential activities throughout the course of the semester. Two course sections were identified as the experimental group, and one course section served as the control group.

Critical components course. Students in the experimental sections received the Critical Components course materials, as suggested by Brown, Ryan Krane, and colleagues (2001; 2003). The authors provided meta-analytic evidence for the following interventions: workbooks and written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, in-session occupational information exploration, modeling, and support building (Brown et al., 2003). Examples of the activities included in each of the five categories of interventions are as follows:

1. Workbooks and written exercises: self-assessments, personal reflection papers, goal-setting worksheets, etc.
2. Individualized interpretations and feedback: personalized assessment feedback, including results of assessments completed during the course of the semester, and feedback on personal reflection papers
3. In-session occupational information exploration: use of computer-based occupational information resources, the Career Development Services library, etc.
4. Modeling: participation in informational interviews and job shadowing, provision of real-world examples by the instructor, etc.
5. Support-building: completion of exercises to identify social and professional support systems, in-class small group discussion of decision-making challenges, etc.

Another unique feature of the Critical Components format was the use of the *Salient Incident Identification Scale,* a three-item, open-ended measure included to assess course participants' reactions to various course activities throughout the semester. The scale was adapted from the work of Kivlighan and Goldfine (1991). The three items

included are “Of the events that occurred over the course of today’s class, which one do you feel was the most important to/for you personally?” “Describe the event - what actually took place, the group members involved, and your own reaction. Why was it important for you?” and “When you think about the class session that you’ve just completed, what stands out for you about your experience?”

The researcher initially intended to administer the *Salient Incident Identification Scale* in the experimental course sections to collect qualitative data about students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of course activities at various different class meetings throughout the semester. However, the open-ended assessment took longer to administer than anticipated. The researcher was compelled to attend to addressing course objectives in the allotted time rather than administering the instrument at multiple class meetings. As a result, data from only one class session were collected using the *Salient Incident Identification Scale.*

Standard course. In contrast with students in the Critical Components course, students enrolled in the third section of the career planning course received the Standard Course format. They also participated in individual, group, and experiential activities and may have inadvertently received some of the same kinds of treatments recommended by Brown et al. (2003). However, the Standard Course format was not designed with the five critical components of career interventions in mind, and was not intended to provide the same level of attention to these factors as the Critical Components Course.

Summary of similarities and differences. As previously noted, there was inevitably some overlap in the philosophy and design of each of the two instructional approaches used in the current study. One goal in the creation of both course formats was

to help students develop career exploration and decision making skills by taking an active role in the process, as recommended by Devlin (1974). Additionally, both course designs were structured, as opposed to unstructured, as suggested by Smith (1981), and included Blustein's (1989) suggested focus on career exploration activities. All three sections of the course were be taught by the same instructor, potentially contributing even more to the amount of overlap between the two instructional methods and to similarities in students' perceptions of benefits gained through participation in the classes.

Despite these similarities, however, the two instructional approaches were markedly different in several important ways. First, the basic formats for each of the two approaches differed. The Critical Components Course was taught in a workshop format that included a combination of large group lectures, small group discussions, experiential activities, individual written assignments, and information sharing. The rationale for use of the workshop approach with the Critical Components group was to foster a greater sense of social support from group members and to allow students more frequent opportunities to received personalized feedback and interpretations, both from the instructor and from other group members. The Critical Components group also differed from the Standard Course group in the frequency and duration of meetings. Critical Components participants met once weekly for one and three-quarter hours. Finally, students in the Critical Components Course received limited reading assignments, primarily in the form of articles or short chapters related to class topics.

The Standard Course group was taught primarily in a traditional lecture format. Although some large group discussions and individual written assignments were incorporated into the teaching method for the Standard Course, the course as a whole was

much more didactic and less experiential. The Standard Course group met twice weekly for 50 minutes per session and completed any experiential activities independently outside of class. Participants in the Standard Course utilized a career planning text instead of the articles provided to the Critical Components Course participants.

The syllabi for the Critical Components Course and the Standard Course can be viewed in Appendices D and E, respectively. At the class meeting before the last class, the recruitment procedure described above was implemented in all three course sections. At the last class meeting of the 15-week semester, all students completed the CDMSE-SF (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996), the CDS (Osipow, 1987), the CTI (Sampson et al., 1996), and the Course Evaluation Form. All students returned these measures and their Consent Forms, whether signed or not. Students were instructed that if they had further questions or concerns about participation in the study, they could contact the researcher and/or the research committee chair. Contact information was provided.

The completed instruments and the consent forms were taken to the administrative office of the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology immediately. There, they were locked in a file cabinet by the departmental secretary until the completion of grade reporting for the fall semester.

The departmental secretary matched identities of students who have submitted their signed consent forms with coded instruments and submitted only the coded instruments to the researcher. Signed consent forms were kept in a locked, confidential file in the departmental office. All other assessment instruments and unsigned consent forms were destroyed.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested for this study.

Hypothesis 1a. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant increases in career decidedness and reductions in career indecision over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 1b. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant increases in career decision making self-efficacy over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 1c. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience significant decreases in negative career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 2a. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater increases in career decidedness and greater decreases in career indecision than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 2b. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater increases in career decision making self-efficacy than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 2c. Students who complete the Critical Components course will experience greater reductions in the presence of negative career thoughts than students enrolled in the standard career planning course.

Hypothesis 3a. Students' demographic variables (e.g., gender and ethnicity) will impact the amount of improvement in career decidedness, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Hypothesis 3b. Students' personality variables as measured by the *NEO-PI-R* will impact the amount of improvement in career decidedness, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts over the course of the semester.

Statistical Analyses

All statistical analyses were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), based on the General Linear Model (GLM). A nonrandomized control-group pretest-posttest design was used to match participants' pre-intervention and post-intervention scores. A 2 (Group: Treatment and Control) X 2 (Gender) X Time: Pre/Post) X 4 (Traits: Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Negative Career Thoughts) mixed factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to assess overall differences between the Critical Components Group and the Standard Course Group and between males and females from pretest to posttest. A series of paired t-tests revealed specific differences pre-post on factors of interest to the study (i.e., career decidedness, career indecision, career decision making self-efficacy, and negative career thoughts). A Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) assessing the impact of Personality Factors (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) as covariates in the interactions between Time (Pretest and Posttest) and Traits (Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Negative Career Thoughts), was included to determine whether there were significant differences between groups as a function of personality factors. Finally, a correlation matrix was used to assess relationships between pre-post changes and personality factors.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Research related to college students' academic and career planning suggests that many students need assistance in making academic and vocational choices. Even students entering a college or university setting with specific intentions regarding their academic major and potential career path may eventually need assistance in reassessing their original plans and making different choices. One approach to facilitating college students' career development and assisting them with career choices is the college career planning course. The present study compared the outcomes of two different approaches to an exploratory college career class in terms of changes in students' career decision making self-efficacy, career decidedness, career indecision, and presence of negative career thoughts. Findings related to the three major sets of hypotheses are presented below.

Participants

Demographic characteristics of the sample are indicated in Table 1. Approximately two-thirds of the students in both the treatment and the control groups were female, and the majority of students were White. Most students were first-year (freshman) students.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample

	Treatment		Control	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Female	20	66.6	14	64
Male	10	33.3	8	36
Total	30	99.9	22	100
Race				
White	27	90	17	77.2
African American	3	10	4	18
Other	0	---	1	4.5
Total	30	100	22	99.7

Note. "Treatment" refers to the Critical Components Course Format. "Control" refers to the Standard Course Format.

Results Pertaining to the Research Questions

The results are presented in the order of the research questions. First, data are presented on the performance of students in the treatment group relative to their pre-post differences on scores related to the key constructs measured in the study: career decidedness, career indecision, career decision-making self-efficacy, and absence of negative career thoughts. The second set of data relate to the question on comparison of the relative effectiveness of the two instructional approaches. Finally, the third set is presented to answer the questions pertaining to the impact of personality variables on performance.

Research Question 1a. Are there significant increases in career decidedness and decreases in career indecision as measured by the *Career Decision Scale* (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al., 1976) as a result of students' participation in the Critical Components course?

Research Question 1b. Are there significant increases in career decision making self-efficacy as measured by the *Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form* (CDMSE-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) as a result of students' participation in the Critical Components course?

Research Question 1c. Are there significant decreases in the presence of negative career thoughts as measured by the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (CTI; Sampson, et al., 1996) as a result of students' participation in the Critical Components course?

Results of the 2 (Group: Treatment and Control) X 2 (Gender) X 2 (Time: Pre/Post) X 4 (Traits: Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Negative Career Thoughts) mixed factorial ANOVA indicated a statistically

significant Time effect, $F(1, 46) = 15.39$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .25$. A series of paired samples t-tests assessed differences in the Critical Components Group pre-post on each of the outcome measures of interest (i.e., Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, and Negative Career Thoughts). The results of the t-tests designed to assess the amount of change between pre- and post-intervention scores on each of the outcome measures are presented in Table 2, including differences in means pre-post, standard deviations, standard error, *t* values, and degrees of freedom.

There were significant increases from pretest to posttest in both Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (M = -.50, $t = .278$, $p < .01$) and Career Decidedness (M = -1.28, $t = -7.52$, $p < .01$). These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the Critical Components Course in two areas. First, the Critical Components Course was successful in increasing participants' feelings about their ability to complete the necessary tasks for making effective, well-informed career decisions. Secondly, there were also significant mean decreases from pretest to posttest in Career Indecision (M = .37, $t = 3.66$, $p < .01$) and Negative Career Thoughts (M = .25, $t = 3.72$, $p < .01$). The Critical Components Course was effective in significantly reducing students' feelings of indecision related to their career choices. Additionally, the Critical Components Course assisted students in reducing their negative thinking related to career decisions and their own career development prognoses.

Table 2

Pre-post Differences in the Critical Components Course Group

Pre-post Outcome Variable	Difference in Mean	SD	Standard Error	*t*	*Df*
Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy	-.50	.91	.18	-2.78*	25
Career Decidedness	-1.28	.93	.17	-7.52*	29
Career Indecision	.37	.54	.10	3.66*	28
Negative Career Thoughts	.25	.36	.07	3.72*	29

*$p < .01$

Separate pre-post means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3 for each of the four outcome variables. For each of the outcome variables, there was a statistically significant change from pretest to posttest. Of particular interest are the findings related to variations among participants at pre- and post-intervention. Based on the standard deviations for each of the four outcome variables, it appears that members of the Critical Components Group became more similar in their levels of career decision making self-efficacy and career decidedness as a result of participation in the course, although they varied more at posttest on the presence of negative career thoughts and on career indecision than they had at pretest.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Pre-Post Outcomes in the Critical Components Course Group

Outcome Variable	Time	Mean	N	SD	Standard Error
Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy	Pre	6.51	26	.90	.18
	Post	7.01	26	.86	.17
Negative Career Thoughts	Pre	1.79	30	.31	.06
	Post	.93	30	.39	.07
Career Decidedness	Pre	1.93	30	.82	.15
	Post	3.22	30	.58	.11
Career Indecision	Pre	2.28	29	.40	.07
	Post	1.92	29	.47	.09

Research Question 2 Results. Are there significant differences between the Critical Components Course and the standard career planning course format in the amount of positive change in students' career decidedness, career indecision, career decision making self-efficacy, and career thoughts?

Results of the mixed factorial ANOVA demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences for Group, $F(1, 46) = .40$, $p = .53$, observed power = .10. Gender, $F(1, 46) = 1.63$, $p = .21$, observed power = .24, or interaction between Group and Gender, $F(1, 46) = .79$, $p = .38$, observed power = .14.

Research Question 3 Results. Do students' demographic and personality variables seem to impact the level of benefit they receive through a career planning course?

Results of the mixed factorial ANOVA including group, gender, and outcome variables demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences for Gender, $F(1, 46) = 1.63$, $p = .21$, observed power = .24, or interaction between Group and Gender, $F(1, 46) = .79$, $p = .38$, observed power = .14. The majority of participants in the study were White. Therefore, analyses related to the influence of race on outcome were not included.

Results of the Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) including Time (pre-post), Traits (Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, and Negative Career Thoughts), and each of the five personality factors as covariates (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) are reported in Table 4. There were no statistically significant differences for these interactions.

Table 4

Interactions between Time (Pre-Post), Traits (Career Decidedness, Career Indecision, Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, and Career Thoughts), and Personality Factors.

Personality Factor	F	Significance	Observed Power
Neuroticism	1.758	.159	.449
Extraversion	.945	.421	.253
Openness	.950	.337	.158
Agreeableness	.256	.857	.098
Conscientiousness	.320	.811	.096

Despite the lack of evidence for the personality variables as influential in students' responses to the Critical Components Course intervention, it was expected that the personality variables were nonetheless related to students' attitudes about career planning. To further explore potential relationships between personality factors and outcome measures, a correlation matrix was constructed. The results are reported in Table 5. Neuroticism was correlated with career decision making self-efficacy at pretest, and with the presence of negative career thoughts at both pretest and posttest. Extraversion was correlated with career decision making self-efficacy at pretest only. Agreeableness was positively correlated with career decidedness and negatively correlated with career indecision at posttest only. Conscientiousness was a positive covariate with career decision making self-efficacy at pretest. The only personality factor not correlated with any of the traits measured was Openness.

Table 5

Correlations between Personality Factors and Traits at Pre- and Posttest

		Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy		Negative Career Thoughts		Career Decidedness		Career Indecision	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Neuroticism	*r*	-.283*	-.084	.318*	.381**	.127	-.185	-.093	.095
	p	.04	.565	.020	.006	.371	.199	.510	.514
	N	53	49	53	50	52	50	52	50
Extraversion	*r*	.279*	.326*	-.054	-.264	.086	.171	-.056	-.029
	p	.043	.022	.700	.064	.544	.235	.693	.839
	N	53	49	53	50	52	50	52	50
Openness	*r*	.025	.192	.162	-.052	.012	.074	.068	-.103
	p	.860	.186	.245	.721	.931	.611	.633	.477
	N	53	49	53	50	52	50	52	50
Agreeableness	*r*	.158	.144	-.097	-.210	-.017	.287*	.020	-.333*
	p	.258	.323	.487	.143	.906	.043	.890	.018
	N	53	49	53	50	52	50	52	50
Conscientiousness	*r*	.307*	.036	-.138	-.195	.125	.182	-.045	-.028
	p	.026	.806	.324	.174	.375	.206	.750	.848
	N	53	49	53	50	52	50	52	50

*p < .05 (two-tailed); **p < .01 (two-tailed)

Ancillary Findings

In addition to results designed to answer the three primary research questions, several other interesting findings emerged that provide a more in-depth look at the impact of career courses on students' attitudes about career planning.

First, with regard to students' career decidedness and career indecision as measured by the CDS (Osipow, Carney, Winer, et al., 1976), the qualitative findings from optional item 19 ("None of the above items describe me. The following would describe me better: (write your response below)") are presented in Table 6. Although only 10 students responded at pre-test and five at post-test, some patterns begin to emerge

as students' descriptions of their current career positions are examined. First, it appears that students who completed item 19 at pretest were experiencing three different general kinds of feelings about their career decision making processes. Some students appeared to be in a position of wanting to rule in or rule out educational and/or career choices that they were seriously considering, or perhaps already pursuing. Other students appeared anxious about foreclosing on other areas of interest, only to regret these omissions later. A final theme in the responses involved generalized anxiety about the unknown aspects of the future. These findings echo Ginn's (1973/74) assertions regarding students' perceptions that career decisions are final decisions, and that the perceived lack of mobility among career choices is anxiety-provoking to many students (p.45).

Additionally, three individuals completed item 19 at both pre- and posttest. Their responses are matched in Table 6, revealing progress in their career planning despite possible differences in their personal priorities or processes.

Table 6

Students' Responses to Optional Item 19 on the Career Decision Scale

Pre-Intervention Response	Post-Intervention Response
I am not sure about my major and I don't know the careers it could lead to.	I have decided on my major. I am unsure of the career I want.
I have decided on elementary education. I love kids and know I would make a good teacher, but I don't have a lot of faith in my own choices, so I don't know if I've made the right decision pursuing education. What if there is something out there I would be better at?	I've picked a major and a career plan, and I'm very happy and confident in both.
I'm happy with my major. I'm given a lot of options. There are other things I would be interested in and I just don't have the information for it.	I'm happy with my major. I'm interested in a lot of possibilities that major can provide for me. I'm just not sure which job I'd rather have.
I think I know what I want to be, but I'm afraid that I will get through school and not be satisfied with my job.	
I know how I want to live, but I don't know what career will take me there.	
I know what I want to do and the lifestyle I want to have but I'm very nervous about everything!	
I have a general idea of what I kinda want to do but not totally certain.	
I know what I want to do, but think the courses leading up to the major may be too hard for me to successfully complete.	
I don't want to get stuck in something that might turn out to be completely wrong for me. I don't want to fail.	
I have lots of interests, but wish I knew what would be the best for me in all aspects.	
	I am set and certain in my career choice.
	I know what major I want to be in. I am "iffy" about minors and a possible double major. I get intimidated easily.

A second source of interesting findings is the *Salient Incident Identification Scale*. Although the scale was only administered at one class meeting, the results emphasize the importance of the social support component in students' perceptions of course effectiveness. In response to the question, "Of the events that occurred over the course of today's class, which one do you feel was the most important to/for you personally," students' responses overwhelmingly referred to some aspect of the group process. For example, one student responded, "Talking about each other's personality." Other students highlighted "Explaining my feedback to others," and "I feel that talking to my group helps me to express my feelings about my career plans." An especially enthusiastic response was received from one student: "Being able to discuss everything together and hear some feedback. I love feedback!" Students in the Critical Components Course were exposed to a small group atmosphere that the Standard Course Group lacked. Although the quantitative findings suggest that students' improvement on outcome measures from pre- to post-intervention were comparable in the two course groups, the qualitative data suggest that students felt that there was special value in their small group interactions.

A final source of interesting ancillary findings is the Course Evaluation Questionnaire. Students were asked to rank order a list of various course activities at the completion of the semester in order to assess which activities seemed most helpful to them in facilitating their career decision making process. Table 7 presents a list of exercises students ranked as their "Top 3 most helpful," along with the number of students and the percentage of students who included the exercise in their top 3.

Table 7

Class Exercises Ranked as "Top 3 Most Helpful" by Students

Course Activity	N	Percent
Strong Interest Inventory	32	65%
Informational Interviewing	27	55%
Job Shadowing	26	53%
Personality Assessments	19	39%
Resume Writing	11	22%
Lecture Materials/ Presentations	8	16%
Career Autobiography	7	14%
Computer Assisted Guidance	6	12%
Visit To Career Center	6	12%
Small Group Discussions	5	10%
Reaction Papers	4	8%

A majority of students found the *Strong Interest Inventory* (SII) to be among the most helpful activities completed during the course of the semester. The experiential activities, informational interviewing and job shadowing, were close behind the SII in

students' perceptions of helpfulness. It is especially interesting to consider which of the Critical Components are incorporated into each of these highly-ranked activities. The Strong Interest Inventory provides individualized interpretations and feedback, and is by far the most popular among students. Both informational interviewing and job shadowing contain elements of modeling and social support, combined with a written exercise in that students were asked to summarize the results of their experiences and elaborate on how what they had learned impacted their current thinking about careers.

Students were also asked to indicate their level of certainty about their academic major choice and about their career choice, each on a five-point scale from "Very Uncertain" to "Very Certain." These results are presented in Table 8. Most students were either "Certain" or "Very Certain" about their major and career choices as a result of participation in course activities.

Table 8

Students' Self-reported Levels of Certainty Regarding Academic Major and Career Plan at the Conclusion of the Course

Level of Certainty	Academic Major (N)	Percentage of Responses	Career Plan (N)	Percentage of Responses
Very Certain	11	20.7%	9	17.3%
Certain	29	54.7%	19	36.5%
Somewhat Certain	13	24.5%	23	44.2%
Uncertain	---		1	1.9%
Very Uncertain	---		---	

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

There were three main purposes of the current study. First, the study was designed to assess the impact of a college career development course that purposefully infused the five critical components of career interventions discussed by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000), and Brown and others (2003) on students' outcome variables (i.e., career decision making self-efficacy, career decidedness, career indecision, and the presence of negative career thoughts). The second purpose of the study was to determine whether there were differences in outcomes between the Critical Components Group and the Standard Course Group. Finally, the study assessed relationships between students' demographic and personality variables and the outcome measures.

Summary of Pre-Post Differences

Results indicated that there was a significant pre-post difference on each of the four outcome variables for the Critical Components Course group. Mean differences from pretest to posttest were significant and in the predicted directions for all outcome variables (i.e., increased career decision making self-efficacy, increased career decidedness, decreased career indecision, and decreased presence of negative career thoughts). These data support the idea that the Critical Components Course was effective in producing the desired outcomes for students who participated in the class.

These results are especially interesting given the small number of participants in

the Critical Components Group. The number of students who completed both pre- and post-intervention measures ranged from 26 (CDMSE-SF) to 30 (CTI; Career Decidedness subscale of CDS). Even with such small numbers, significant changes were observed as a result of course interventions. The course activities were successful in helping students feel more confident about their career decision making abilities and more decided about their career choices. The activities also aided students in reducing their negative thinking about career planning processes and in reducing their overall indecision about their personal career plans. The findings overwhelmingly reinforce the idea that college career planning courses are an effective, efficient means of helping students become more certain of and comfortable with their academic and career plans. The data echo previous findings (i.e., Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998) suggesting that dollars spent to offer such courses in colleges and universities are well-spent in terms of addressing a large number of students' needs for a relatively low cost. They also suggest that students with a wide variety of demographic and personality characteristics benefit from the courses. The data offer encouragement to colleges and universities to persist in offering similar existing courses, or to consider offering them if they do not currently exist.

These findings are also of interest to career development professionals in that they reinforce the effectiveness of the use of the five critical components in a college career planning course. Students who participated in the course experienced significant changes as a result of experiencing these components in their course activities. It is also interesting to note the way in which students responded to open-ended questions about their experiences. A majority of students reported that they enjoyed receiving individualized interpretations and feedback regarding their own specific career

development traits. They also mentioned in their feedback that they perceived benefits from the social support aspect of processing their information within the small group setting. Although these results do not confirm the effectiveness of these particular intervention components, they do suggest that students are especially attracted to these components. It is possible that their interest in receiving feedback and support in these formats may have made them more receptive to other aspects of the course, and thus may have increased their overall motivation to engage in the career planning process.

Group Comparisons

Results related to differences between the two groups (i.e., Critical Components Course and Standard Course) demonstrate that there were no statistically significant differences between the two course formats, echoing previous studies examining differences in instructional methods for career planning classes (e.g., Davis & Horne, 1986; Peng, 2001; Peng & Herr, 1999). While there were significant pre-post differences in target outcomes for both groups, there was no statistical difference found in the pre-post comparison of the two groups. There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, treatment fidelity may have been compromised because both formats were taught by the same instructor. Thus, even though the course structure was designed to be significantly different, the instructor was not. Second, although only the Critical Components Course was designed to purposefully infuse the five career intervention components described by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000), there was some overlap in activities and content between the two courses. Additionally, relational aspects of the two experiences were not assessed, and it may be presumed that the instructor/researcher related similarly to the two groups, thus creating more overlap between the two course

experiences than intended. Finally, another confounding variable may have been the limited size of the sample. Both the treatment group and the control group had relatively small numbers, making it more difficult to observe differences between the two groups even if differences existed.

Despite the absence of statistical differences between the two groups, the results suggest that the interventions were a success in terms of facilitating students' academic and career planning. Once again, these findings speak to the utility of the college career course in assisting students in the career planning stage. The findings are especially exciting given the relatively low cost to provide the interventions.

The similarity of outcomes between the two groups is especially interesting given the differences in formats for each of the two courses. Only the Critical Components Group received the benefit of small group interactions at each class meeting. Students in this group were also asked to complete more experiential exercises than students in the Standard Course Group, and they received occupational information at every class session in the form of "current career issues" articles that their classmates presented during the first few minutes of each class. Students in the Critical Components Course group commented that they found the interactions and the weekly infusion of current career information especially helpful to their career planning processes and beneficial to their overall experience in the course. Even without these aspects of the career planning course, however, the Standard Course Group improved significantly on each of the outcome measures. Further, the present findings also provide a contrast to earlier findings related to frequency of class meetings (i.e., Vernick, Reardon, & Sampson, 2004). Despite the fact that the Critical Components Group met only once per week, as opposed

to the twice-weekly meetings the Standard Course Group experienced, the outcomes were not significantly different. The findings pose an interesting question regarding qualities of each of the two course formats that were not measured in the current study. It is possible that an intangible influence was present in each of the two courses. Discovering what this "intangible influence" is could add even more value to the delivery of college career courses.

Effect of Demographic and Personality Variables on Target Outcomes

Findings related to the impact of demographic and personality variables suggest that there was no significant impact on students' outcomes in either of the two groups based on gender or personality factors as measured by the *NEO-PI-R* (Costa & McCrae, 1992). These results were surprising, given the nature of the career planning process as it relates to the personality factors measured by the *NEO-PI-R*. For example, it might be expected that students who were higher in Neuroticism at pre-intervention might be so anxious that they had difficulty engaging in the career planning process. Similarly, it might be anticipated that students who were higher in Agreeableness at pre-intervention were more likely to choose the "path of least resistance" in their career planning in order to reduce conflict with significant others as well as within themselves. The results are encouraging, however, in that they suggest that even students who might be hypothesized to experience more resistance to a deep investigation of their own career needs and desires benefited from course interventions. These results suggest that the activities included in both course formats were accessible to students with a wide range of personality characteristics. The results further speak to the usefulness of the college

career planning course as an intervention that provides a positive impact for many different types of students simultaneously.

Although there were no significant interactions between personality factors and the outcome variables of interest, correlational analyses suggest that relationships between certain personality factors and the outcome measures employed in the present study do exist. For example, there was a negative correlation at pretest between Neuroticism and career decision making self-efficacy (r = -.283, p = .04). This suggests that students who were higher in Neuroticism at pretest may have had a tendency toward lower self-efficacy. It is especially interesting that this trend did not continue at posttest, when the correlation between Neuroticism and career decision making self-efficacy was not significant (r =-.084, p = .565). No conclusions regarding causality may be made, but the results suggest the possibility that participation in a career course mediated the effects of students' levels of Neuroticism on their career decision making self-efficacy.

A second interesting finding was the correlation between Extraversion and career decision making self-efficacy at both pretest and posttest. Both correlations were positive and significant, suggesting that students who are higher in Extraversion may naturally have a greater sense of self-efficacy than those lower in Extraversion. A third interesting, but not surprising, finding is the correlation between Neuroticism and the presence of negative career thoughts as measured by the *Career Thoughts Inventory* (Sampson et al., 1996). Neuroticism was positively correlated with the presence of negative career thoughts at both pretest and posttest, suggesting that students who are higher in Neuroticism may have a tendency toward more negative thinking with regard to their

career planning processes. Despite this correlation, however, students still experienced reductions in their negative career thoughts as a result of their participation in the course.

The findings related to Agreeableness are also interesting. Agreeableness was positively correlated with both career decidedness and career indecision at posttest only. Perhaps students who are higher in Agreeableness are more likely to go along with a career plan proposed by a significant figure in their lives, or perhaps they are more likely to experience a higher level of commitment to the career plan they initially explore than are students who are lower in Agreeableness.

A final finding of interest is the relationship between Conscientiousness and career decision making self-efficacy. This relationship was significant only at pretest (r = .307, p = .026). One possible explanation for this finding is that students who entered the course with high levels of conscientiousness had higher expectations for their abilities to make and implement career plans congruent with their interests and values than students whose Conscientiousness scores were lower. However, upon completion of the college career course, it may be assumed that students were more aware of the complexity of the career decision making and planning process. Therefore, it is possible that students at all levels of Conscientiousness may have experienced a change in self-efficacy to realistically reflect the difficulties that may arise in making and implementing a final career choice.

Conclusions and Implications

The present study offers support for the existing literature related to the effectiveness of college career development courses. The findings suggest that career

classes have a significant impact on students' attitudes and beliefs about career development, and that this impact is overwhelmingly positive.

Interpreting the impact of the five critical components on students' outcomes within the current study is a complex task that can be viewed from at least two very different perspectives. On the one hand, students who participated in the Critical Components Course demonstrated significant improvement in the variables related to academic and career planning. They also provided qualitative responses that indicated a perceived benefit as a result of at least two of the five components, individualized interpretations and feedback and social support. From this perspective, the idea that the critical components are effective in promoting students' career development is largely supported.

On the other hand, however, the absence of statistical differences between participants in the two course formats suggests that there is not clear evidence for the special utility of the critical components in producing improved outcomes on career development measures. However, it seems important to consider this interpretation with caution. As previously discussed, some aspects of the two courses overlapped considerably. The same instructor created and administered the interventions to both groups. It is likely safe to assume that she related similarly to students in both groups, thus providing modeling and support, two of the five critical components, in at least an indirect manner to both groups. Both groups accessed career information in session via computer databases and websites. Both groups received individualized interpretations in the form of assessment result reports (i.e., the *Strong Interest Inventory*). Both groups completed written exercises as part of their course activities. Finally, both groups sought

modeling through experiential exercises that required them to interact with individuals who were working in career fields of interest to them.

These similarities between course interventions highlight the difficulty of isolating the critical components in a study that does not include a pure control group. However, it seems more useful to think of isolating each of the components in order to study its individual utility in producing the desired outcomes in students' career development. Most college courses of any kind include some of the critical components; it seems reasonable to expect that students are going to access information and write about that information in some manner despite the kind of course in which they are enrolled. And, as noted above, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much of an impact factors like personality or relational style of the course instructor may have on students' receptiveness to course interventions. It is possible that both the Critical Components Course and the Standard Course groups benefited from the five critical components, as both instructional groups were undoubtedly exposed to some aspects of the components (i.e., use of written exercises, seeking occupational information in session), intentional or not.

Finally, the results of the impact of personality factors on outcomes are interesting despite the absence of confirmatory data to suggest that personality variables are reliable predictors of students' career-related outcomes. The results suggest that there are relationships between personality factors and the outcome measures used in the present study. These relationships may point to differences in students' attitudes toward many essential life tasks, including their attitudes toward career development. Further, they may impact students' response to career course interventions. Assessments aimed at

exploring students' process reactions to course interventions may provide more insight as to the role of personality factors in career planning attitudes and outcomes.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are several limitations that should be addressed regarding the design of the present study. First, the researcher/instructor was the same for both the Critical Components Course and the Standard Course. While every effort was put forth to adhere to treatment fidelity, there was undoubtedly some slippage, primarily because the five critical components are common at least partially in traditional course formats used in collegiate offerings of the career planning course. In addition, the researcher had been a primary contributor to the design of the format for the Standard course that had been taught at the home of the participants for the past four years. Therefore, many of the same goals, ideas, and activities are included in all of the career development courses, regardless of the instructor, at this university. Further, the researcher was the instructor for both the Critical Components and the Standard Course groups. Although this circumstance may have ensured greater uniformity in student-instructor interactions in both groups, it also may have indirectly (and unintentionally) influenced treatment outcomes. Unfortunately, the overlap between both content and student-instructor relational style may have impacted treatment integrity. Ideally, the study would have incorporated multiple instructors who were uninvolved with the research aspect of course administration.

A second limitation of the present study was the small sample size. Career development courses at the host institution are generally limited in size to 25 to 30 students each. Some students in the present study did not complete all of the measures, or

chose not to allow their results to be used for the study, further compounding the problem of small numbers.

Additional limitations occur with regard to the measures used for the study. Although the study incorporated some of the more widely-used instruments (, thereby allowing comparisons with previous studies, no measures of students' attitudes toward the instructor were used. Therefore, the relational aspects of students in each of the two groups were not measured. Finally, it might have been helpful to assess students' final career choices with an open-ended question about their current career goals and level of confidence at the end of the class experience.

A final limitation of the present study is the lack of longitudinal data to assess whether students carried out their intended career plans after completing either of the two career courses. It is possible that students in both courses changed their plans but were still able to utilize the career planning skills learned in their career development classes to assist them in choosing more congruent career paths. However, the stability of choices and the methods utilized to alter these choices cannot be known based on the current design.

Implications for future research. Despite the limitations for the current study, it retains considerable value in terms of expanding our current understanding of the college career development course. The absence of differences between the two groups highlights the need for more intensive study of college career course designs and outcomes. It illuminates the difficulties currently faced in accurately measuring some of the subtle nuances of this particular career intervention format. Although an obvious answer to the problem is the inclusion of a true control group, at second glance, this answer is not so

appealing. Dozens of studies have found that career course interventions are effective. The question that current research seeks to answer is, what makes them effective? Further, are some intervention components more effective than others?

The current findings offer several different interpretive possibilities. First, it is possible that the concept of "good enough" counseling can be useful in understanding the results. Perhaps the Standard Course format was "good enough" already to produce the desired results, without purposefully infusing more of a "good thing" by focusing on the five critical components. Previous studies (e.g., Spokane & Olive, 1983; Oliver & Spokane, 1988) have suggested that career classes, regardless of their theoretical bases or designs, are more effective than other methods of providing career planning assistance. Students may have received adequate influence of the critical components in the Standard Course format simply by virtue of the instructor's efforts to address common course goals. It is possible that the critical components have become such an organic, standard part of the career course curriculum that they are providing the hoped-for benefits without even being considered intentionally.

Conversely, it is possible that sufficient attention was not given to each of the critical components in designing the Critical Components Course to make this course substantially different from the Standard Course format. Based on the similarity of findings between the two groups, it appears that the Standard Course format already contained sufficient infusion of the five critical components to impact students positively in each of the four outcome variables.

A possibility that may warrant further consideration is, perhaps the critical components have more of an impact on the outcomes of other modalities of career

counseling, including individual and group career counseling, than on a career class. It is possible that the very nature of a class includes so many aspects of the critical components that the two concepts are virtually indistinguishable. As noted, most classes of any kind include at least some of the critical components, if not all five. Although Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) and Brown and others (2003) indicated that improved outcomes resulted from the inclusion of the five critical components, regardless of treatment modality, it is possible that career courses were not included in their definition of treatment modalities by virtue of the idea that they are labeled classes, not counseling. Despite this possibility, the present study reinforces the idea that the components are indeed effective in a career course format in assisting students in their career planning processes.

Another perspective involves the idea that availability of particular career development tools may impact what students in a college career planning course find most useful, and what they ultimately employ to reach their goals of becoming more confident in their decision making processes. For example, the Critical Components Group received more social support and more opportunities for individualized interpretations and feedback. They may have used these tools more in their decision making processes simply because the tools were more readily available to them, while students in the Standard Course format relied on other tools that were present in the course interventions they experienced.

One way to refine the study of each of the critical components' impact on career development outcomes would be to develop a means of isolating each. For example, in order to measure the impact of social support, an online course could be compared with

an in-person course, since it can safely be assumed that online courses do not offer the same sense of community that in-person courses offer. Similarly, to measure the impact of written exercises on students' outcomes, one course format could ask students to simply talk about their career exploration findings, while another could ask them to write about them. Clearly, designing studies to more accurately reflect the impact of the critical components on students' career development is a challenge. However, it appears to be worthwhile from the perspective of wanting to offer the most benefit with the resources available. Studies that isolate each of the critical components would help to answer the question of what truly is critical, or necessary.

An additional suggestion for future research is the use of a larger participant pool. It seems that larger participant pools than have previously been employed in studies of college career courses are necessary in order to make confident conclusions regarding outcomes. A cooperative effort between several major universities to teach the same career development course format, possibly funded by a national organization with interests in career development, would provide adequate statistical power to draw conclusions about what makes college career courses effective. Since many major colleges and universities are already offering college career planning courses, the benefits of a collaborative effort among them seem to far outweigh the costs associated with such an effort. A manualized approach to the career planning course that considers isolation of each of the five critical components could be employed in a large-scale study in order to maximize the potential to uncover differences in outcomes as a result of various course interventions. Such a study could be instrumental in answering the "Why?" behind the effectiveness of college career planning courses.

Finally, a longitudinal approach to the outcomes of college career development courses would provide more clarity regarding the true outcomes (Folsom & Reardon, 2003, p. 427) of such classes. Are students merely feeling better about their career decision making process at the conclusion of the career course, only to become anxious or confused again at a future point, or are their decisions stable over time? Do students who decide to change their career plans after conclusion of the course feel better prepared to do so than students who have never completed such a course? These questions remain to be answered, through large-scale, comprehensive studies designed to benefit several interested parties in unique ways.

First, colleges and universities are increasingly faced with a need to provide evidence that programs offered to students are effective in reaching educational and developmental goals, and the college career course is certainly no exception. In times of funding cuts requiring that some courses are scaled back or discontinued altogether at major universities nationwide, it seems critical for college and university administrators to carefully examine whether services are truly beneficial to students, and why. Despite the mounting evidence over the past four decades that college career courses are effective, there is little to no evidence of the true outputs associated with participation in such a course, or of the specific instructional methods and materials leading to desirable outputs. A noted above, several institutions could pool resources to provide a large-scale, longitudinal study that follows participants in a manualized college career course for several years after completion of the course to determine the tangible outputs associated with participation and to glean information about the practical value of participating versus not participating in such a course.

Second, professional organizations gain credibility by providing evidence of their profession's effectiveness for both members of the profession and for the lay public. The largest professional organization associated with career development in the United States is the National Career Development Association (NCDA), with a membership totaling approximately 4,200. Despite the size and influence of this organization, a large-scale examination of the effectiveness of many common practices in career development counseling and education has not been supported at this point. Large-scale longitudinal studies may be beyond the scope of many independent researchers and/or practitioners in colleges and universities for a variety of reasons, not the least of which are logistical and financial challenges. The NCDA is in an ideal position to support a comprehensive study that follows participants in college career courses over a period of several years after termination from the university. Support from such a well-respected organization would no doubt assist with many of the practical challenges (e.g., funding) associated with large-scale, longitudinal studies, but would also garner interest from career development professionals nationwide and could lead to more streamlined efforts to understand the true value of college career courses.

A final interested party who could benefit from large-scale studies of college career courses is the rather large pool of publishers who provide career assessment instruments for practitioners and educators to use in working with career counseling clients and in teaching about career development. As previously noted, there is a huge array of such assessment instruments available currently, and many of these instruments seem to overlap in scope and purpose. There is little consistency among researchers regarding which instruments are preferable for use in studying career counseling

outcomes. A large-scale study could provide valuable insights into the utility of various instruments for the purposes of assessing intervention effectiveness. Such a study could also offer greater certainty regarding the relationships among these assessment instruments (i.e., where the various assessments do and do not overlap). At the most basic level, sponsorship of a large-scale study could only serve to positively promote a career assessment publisher.

The idea of collecting follow-up data for several years following participation in a career exploration class is one of the simplest, most straightforward approaches to enhancing the current body of knowledge related to best practices in college career courses. Knowing what happens five, 10, or even 20 years after completion of a career class seems critical to determining how to best structure the courses and who is most likely to benefit from them. Colleges and universities need to work together with the National Career Development Association and with career assessment publishers to develop the kinds of studies that will provide clarity to the current understanding of how and why career classes work. This is by far the most important recommendation to emerge from the current study, in that the study highlights the need for conceptualization that extends beyond the snapshot of outcomes available in a pre-post design.

Conclusions

The current study has been largely successful in addressing its three primary goals. Results indicate that both forms of a college career course employed in the study are effective in increasing students' feelings of self-efficacy about their career decision making process and helping them feel more decided about their academic and career plans. Both course formats also encouraged students to think more positively about career

decision making and to reduce feelings of indecision about their future plans. The results also suggest that both male and female students possessing a variety of personality characteristics can benefit from college career planning courses.

What makes the current study particularly useful to practitioners, researchers, and administrators, however, is the insight it provides into measuring the utility of various intervention components in producing desired outcomes. It is the first study to attempt to measure the impact of the five intervention components hypothesized as critical by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) and Brown and others (2003) in a career planning course. The study provides a valuable starting point for how to differentiate among these components in future studies. It also highlights the possibility that students are simply using what is available to them, suggesting that we can create interventions that are more effective than those previously offered if we begin to offer the most useful tools to students who are seeking assistance in their academic and career planning. With more students entering colleges and universities than ever before, and with the rising costs of college education, it is sensible to make streamlining students' academic and career planning experiences a top priority in order to facilitate a positive college experience. Continued study of the five critical components as described above would enlighten career development professionals and administrators as to how to provide the most efficient, effective benefit to students. It is hoped that the current study will influence college and university administrators, the National Career Development Association, and career development professionals nationwide to examine in depth not only whether their career planning courses work, but more specifically, why they are or are not effective.

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APPENDIX A:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT
For a Research Study Entitled
--Comparing Outcomes of Two Approaches to a Career Planning Course—

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to evaluate the outcomes of two different approaches to a career planning course. This study is being conducted by Shannon K. Salter, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology, under the supervision of John C. Dagley, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology. We hope to learn the extent to which students in two different course formats benefit from a career planning course in determining career goals and major preferences. You are being invited to participate because you are currently enrolled in COUN 1000, Career Orientation and Planning. If you decide to participate and are under 19 years of age, we must obtain your parent/guardian's consent for you to participate.

We do not anticipate that you will experience any discomfort, or that there will be any risks involved with participation in the study.

If you decide to participate, we will ask you to give your permission to include the data from the assessments you have already completed this semester in our data pool. Your name and other identifying information will not be associated with your data except to ensure that you have approved the inclusion of your data in the study. Should you decide not to participate, your data will not be included.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. In order to ensure confidentiality of your information, your personal identity will not be directly matched with information you provide. Information you provide will be coded, and the master list matching your identity and code will be housed in a locked file in the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology. The researchers will not have access to the match between your identity and your code. Additionally, all assessments you complete will be housed in locked files in the same departmental office. Your identifying information will be destroyed immediately following completion of the study.

Information collected through your participation may be used as part of a doctoral dissertation, may be published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting. If so, none of your identifiable information will be included.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw any data which has been collected about yourself at any time, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your current or future relations with the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology and School Psychology, nor will it impact your course grade for COUN 1000.

If you have any questions, I invite you to ask them now. If you have questions later, Shannon Salter (844-4744 or saltesk@auburn.edu) or John C. Dagley (844-5160 or daglejc@auburn.edu) will be happy to answer them. You will be provided a copy of this form to keep.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)844-5966 or email at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's Signature Date	Investigator obtaining consent Date
Print Name	Print Name
Parent's or Guardian's Signature Date (if appropriate)	
Print Name	

APPENDIX B:

STANDARD COURSE SYLLABUS

COUN 1000-001 Career Orientation and Planning
Fall 2006 – 2 Credits

Auburn University College of Education
Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology
Haley Center 2324

Instructor: Shannon Salter, M.Ed.
Email: saltesk@auburn.edu
Office: 303 Martin Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849
Phone: 844-3869

Meeting Times:
Monday & Wednesday, 9:00-9:50

Office Hours: By appointment only – email instructor to schedule an appointment.

Required Text:
Luzzo, D. A. (2002). *Making Career Decisions That Count: A Practical Guide* (2nd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Additional Recommended (Optional) Text:
Bolles, R. N. (2005). *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Note: THIS COURSE IS OPEN TO FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE STUDENTS ONLY. UPPERCLASSMEN ARE ALLOWED ONLY UNDER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.

Course Description:
This course provides students with assistance in making effective career decisions. The course is appropriate for anyone who is interested in evaluating his or her career development or considering a career change. Students learn about the process of career decision-making and gain personal insight through numerous hands-on activities, in-class exercises, and by job shadowing.

Why Is The Course Needed?
Career planning and management is a relatively recent social invention. For hundreds of generations, there was very little freedom of choice in occupational selection. Contemporary Americans have well over 12,000 different occupations from which to choose. In just a little over a century we have gone from a no choice or limited choice situation to a point where the sheer multitude of possibilities often makes the process of choosing an occupation very frustrating, time consuming, and haphazard. Sometimes, the occupation finally chosen does not fit the temperaments, interests, and values of the individual. This course is designed to help persons learn how to remedy this problem.

Purpose and Goals of the Course:
Career Orientation and Planning is designed to meet the needs of individuals wishing to develop personal skills in career planning and management. Career management and planning involves more than just helping persons choose or enter an occupation. It also includes self-assessment of interests, values, and skills, understanding the steps in career decision making, and learning the necessary skills to obtain and keep a job once a choice has been made. The basic mission of this course is to provide an opportunity for students to learn about and develop the necessary skills in all areas of career planning.

Course Objectives:

1. To be able to describe and understand the process of career development.
2. To understand how personal characteristics, e.g., interests, values, and skills, influence career development.
3. To become oriented to the socioeconomic world of work as it impacts individual and family career systems.
4. To identify appropriate academic major(s) and/or occupational alternatives in relation to personal characteristics.
5. To learn about and use a variety of information resources to explore academic major or career options.
6. To understand career development theories and use decision-making skills for life/career planning and management.
7. To formulate action plans and strategies for moving toward implementation of life/career goals.
8. To learn about and use skills necessary for successful job placement.
9. To learn about multiculturalism in careers.

Course Requirements:

Attendance in class is vital and required as this course is highly experiential and requires participation in various in-class activities. **If you know that you will be unable, for any reason, to come to class regularly, please choose another course to take this semester.** Students will be required to complete all of the exercises assigned in the class and to engage in a series of career decision-making activities throughout the semester. Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Students will also complete a career assessment instrument (the Strong Interest Inventory) administered in class. There will be a $15 fee for the cost of the instrument billed to your bursar's bill.

Grading and Evaluations:

20 points - Homework, in-class assignments, and class participation

This includes activities completed in class as well as assignments given as homework. Just being in class does not mean that you are participating. Students are required to complete assigned readings, ask and answer questions, interact with other students during group activities, and turn in homework on time. Students will also spend time in a computer lab learning to use technology in the career planning process. Meeting places for computer lab days will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to keep up with all reading and homework assignments. **All short papers submitted as reflections should be typed.**

10 points - Career Autobiography

- Students will compose a paper reflecting on their own experiences related to career development. Areas to be included are family background, educational experiences, work experience, involvement in extracurricular activities, and current career goals. See pages 20-21 in the text for more ideas about how to compose your career autobiography.
- This paper should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and 5-6 pages in length. Formatting concerns should be discussed with the instructor prior to the due date.

10 points - Career Development Services Visit and Reflection:

- Students will spend 50 minutes in CDS (303 Mary Martin Hall) and look at what they have to offer: books, magazines, computer programs, etc. **Be sure to check in at the front desk using your Auburn student ID.**
- Compose a reflection about your visit to CDS and refer to the materials you found helpful. Include a reference list of **at least 3** different new sources of information that you learned about and how they will help you with your career decision-making process. This paper should be typed in 12-point font, approximately one page in length, single-spaced.

20 points - Informational Interviews (2 @ 10 pts each)

- Students will complete two informational interviews. Informational interviewing will be covered in class. You are to take the information discussed and select two people who are currently employed in career areas that interest you to interview. **Please plan your informational interviews adequately ahead of time to meet the due dates.**
- You will compose a two-page typed, double-spaced paper for each interview summarizing your informational interview experience. Include the name of the person you interviewed, his or her title, and place of employment. Also include questions you asked, responses you received, and your overall impressions of the career area explored and of your interviewing experience in general. Due dates for the informational interviews are specified on the schedule.

15 points - Job Shadow

Students will complete a job shadow. The due date is specified on the schedule. **Advance planning is very important for activities that require making arrangements with others.**

- Complete 2 hours of job shadowing with a person holding a job similar to your career interest area. Students **may not** job shadow a family member, and the person being shadowed must be employed in the student's field of interest. Remember, you are completing this to get an idea of what someone in the field actually does.
- Describe your job shadow experience in a two to three page paper. Be sure to include the name of the person shadowed, his or her title and place of employment, and what your experience was like. Reflect on how this experience influenced or did not influence your career decision-making process. Use the information in the text on pages 64-67 to assist you in planning, conducting, and summarizing this experience.

25 points - Portfolio

- Students will compile a portfolio of materials to be turned in by the date specified on the schedule. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with and compile materials completed in the course through course activities, homework assignments, etc. **A key component of the portfolio is integration of your activities in this course and reflection on your career development process throughout the semester.** Further instructions regarding the portfolio will be provided in class.

Grading Scale:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Course Policies:

**Students are expected to attend all class sessions and arrive promptly. Contact the instructor regarding attendance issues. Absences will be considered unexcused unless they meet the criteria for excused absences as outlined in the Tiger Cub. Incomplete grades and absences beyond the set amount will be considered only for university recognized reasons.

You are allowed two unexcused absences. **Every day that you miss beyond these two unexcused absences will result in a 3-point reduction of your final grade.

Tardiness to class is disruptive and therefore is not appropriate classroom behavior. Students who chose to interrupt class by arriving late regularly will be asked **not to return.

****Cell phones and beepers are to be **TURNED OFF** during class.

****All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Homework and in-class assignments turned in late will receive half credit. Grades for major assignments turned in late will also be reduced. **Hand in all assignments in person, unless instructed otherwise.**

****Students are expected to keep up with the readings. It is your responsibility to arrange access to materials so that you will be prepared for discussions. A lack of class participation reflects an unacceptable level of preparedness for class, and may result in a pop quiz.

******It is your responsibility to keep up with your grade.** Students who receive a grade of C or below at the point of mid-term grades should contact the instructor about plans for improvement on the remaining assignments. Attendance penalties and points missed can add up quickly.

******Auburn University email** is the official means of communication for Auburn students, faculty, and staff. Appointments to meet with the instructor outside of class should be made **by email**. Additionally, students should check their AU email often.

******Students who are eligible for special accommodations should inform the instructor within the first class week to ensure that accommodations can be made in a timely manner.**

****** **The syllabus is subject to change with the instructor's view of the students' needs. Students will be given a copy of any changes to the syllabus as early as is feasible.**

Course Schedule – Fall 2006

Date	Class Topic	Reading Due	HW/Assignments Due
Wed., Aug. 16	Introduction and Syllabus; Assessments		
Mon., Aug. 21	Continue Assessments; Introduction to the World of Work	Chapter 1	Personal Data Sheet
Wed., Aug. 23	Introduction to Career Development as a Process	Chapter 2	
Mon., Aug. 28	Thinking about Early Influences and Aspirations		
Wed., Aug. 30	Beginning to Set Goals		List of Early Aspirations/influences; *Career Autobiography Due*
Mon., Sept. 4	NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday		
Wed., Sept. 6	Identifying your Values	Chapter 4	Goal Setting Exercise 1
Mon., Sept. 11	Personality, Interests, and Skills: An Overview	Chapter 3	Work Values Exercise
Wed., Sept. 13	**Computer Lab**: Assessing your Personality		
Mon., Sept. 18	**Computer Lab:** Assessing your Interests		Computer Lab Reflection 1 (from 9/13)
Wed., Sept. 20	Clarifying Your Interests: Strong Interest Inventory Results		
Mon., Sept. 25	Pinpointing your Transferable Skills		Strong Interest Inventory Reflection from 2/9
Wed., Sept. 27	Integrating your Self-Knowledge	Chapter 5	Transferable Skills Exercise
Mon., Oct. 2	Accessing & Processing Information: An Overview	Chapter 6	
Wed., Oct. 4	Conducting an Informational Interview		
Mon., Oct. 9	**Computer Lab:** Accessing & Processing Information using Discover		*CDS Visit Reflection Due*
Wed., Oct. 11	**Computer Lab:** Accessing and		

	Processing Information using the Internet		
Mon., Oct. 16	Alternative Ways to Work and Leisure		Computer Lab Reflection 2 (from 10/9 and 10/11)
Wed., Oct. 18	Family Roles and Primary Life Tasks		*Informational Interview 1 Due;* Leisure Activity Exercise
Mon., Oct. 23	Gender Issues: In and Out of Work		Worksheet: Balancing Priorities
Wed., Oct. 25	Diversity in the Workplace		
Mon., Oct. 30	Decision Making: Process and Outcome	Chapter 8	
Wed., Nov. 1	More on Decision Making	Chapter 7	Decision Making Exercises
Mon., Nov. 6	Selecting and Changing a Major		
Wed., Nov. 8	Building Your Resume/Planning for Serendipity		
Mon., Nov. 13	Resumes and Other Written Communications I		*Informational Interview 2 Due*
Wed., Nov. 15	Resumes & Written Communications II		Resume Draft
Mon., Nov. 20	No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday		
Wed., Nov. 22	No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday		
Mon., Nov. 27	Networking		Networking Contact List *Job Shadow Due*
Wed., Nov. 29	Interviews & Attitude		
Mon., Dec. 4	More on interviewing and Getting a job		
Wed., Dec. 6	Wrap Up	Chapter 10	*Portfolio Due*

APPENDIX C:

CRITICAL COMPONENTS COURSE SYLLABUS

COUN 1000-007 Career Orientation and Planning
Fall 2006 – 2 Credits

Auburn University College of Education
Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology
Haley Center 2438

Instructor: Shannon Salter, M.Ed.
Email: saltesk@auburn.edu
Office: 303 Martin Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849
Phone: 844-3869

Meeting Times:
Tuesday, 10:00-11:45 a.m.

Office Hours: By appointment only – email instructor to schedule an appointment.

Required Readings:
Required readings will be provided throughout the semester to accompany in-class activities and discussions. These readings will be taken from various sources, including the following:

Bolles, R. N. (2005). *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Krumboltz, J. D., & Levin, A. S. (2004). *Luck is No Accident: Making the Most of Happenstance in Your Life and Career*. Atascadero, CA: Impact publishers.

Note: THIS COURSE IS OPEN TO FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE STUDENTS ONLY. UPPERCLASSMEN ARE ALLOWED ONLY UNDER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.

Course Description:
This course provides students with assistance in making effective career decisions. The course is appropriate for anyone who is interested in evaluating his or her career development or considering a career change. Students learn about the process of career decision-making and gain personal insight through numerous hands-on activities, in-class exercises, and by job shadowing.

Why Is The Course Needed?
Career planning and management is a relatively recent social invention. For hundreds of generations, there was very little freedom of choice in occupational selection. Contemporary Americans have well over 12,000 different occupations from which to choose. In just a little over a century we have gone from a no choice or limited choice situation to a point where the sheer multitude of possibilities often makes the process of choosing an occupation very frustrating, time consuming, and haphazard. Sometimes, the occupation finally chosen does not fit the temperaments, interests, and values of the individual. This course is designed to help persons learn how to remedy this problem.

Purpose and Goals of the Course:
Career Orientation and Planning is designed to meet the needs of individuals wishing to develop personal skills in career planning and management. Career management and planning involves more than just helping persons choose or enter an occupation. It also includes self-assessment of interests, values, and skills, understanding the steps in career

decision making, and learning the necessary skills to obtain and keep a job once a choice has been made. The basic mission of this course is to provide an opportunity for students to learn about and develop the necessary skills in all areas of career planning.

Course Objectives:

1. To be able to describe and understand the process of career development.
2. To understand how personal characteristics (i.e., family of origin influences, interests, values, personality, and skills) influence career development.
3. To become oriented to the socioeconomic world of work as it impacts individual and family career systems.
4. To identify appropriate academic major(s) and/or occupational alternatives in relation to personal characteristics.
5. To learn about and use a variety of information resources to explore academic major or career options.
6. To use decision-making skills for life/career planning.
7. To participate in experiential activities designed to increase self-knowledge and develop necessary skills for use in the world of work.
8. To learn about and use skills necessary for successful job placement.
9. To learn about multiculturalism in careers.

Course Requirements:

Attendance in class is vital and required as this course is highly experiential and requires participation in various in-class activities. **If you know that you will be unable, for any reason, to come to class regularly, please choose another course to take this semester.**

Students will be required to complete all of the exercises assigned in the class and to engage in a series of career decision-making activities throughout the semester. Students are required to complete all assigned readings.

Students will also complete a career assessment instrument (the Strong Interest Inventory) administered in class. There will be a $15 fee for the cost of the instrument billed to your bursar's bill.

Grading and Evaluations (100 points total):

20 points - Homework, in-class assignments, and class participation

This includes activities completed in class as well as assignments given as homework. Just being in class does not mean that you are participating**. A major component of the course involves your interactions with other group members.** Students are required to complete assigned readings, ask and answer questions, interact with other students during group activities, and turn in homework on time. Students will also spend time in a computer lab learning to use technology in the career planning process. Meeting places for computer lab days will be announced in class. Students will visit Career Development Services as part of their class activities. It is your responsibility to keep up with all reading and homework assignments. **All short papers submitted as reflections should be typed.**

10 points - Career Autobiography

- Students will compose a paper reflecting on their own experiences related to career development. Areas to be included are family background, educational experiences, work experience, involvement in extracurricular activities, and current career goals. This paper should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and 5 or more pages in length. Formatting concerns should be discussed with the instructor prior to the due date.

20 points - Informational Interviews (2 @ 10 pts each)

- Students will complete two informational interviews. Informational interviewing will be covered in class. You are to take the information discussed and select two people who are currently employed in career areas that interest you to interview. **Please plan your informational interviews adequately ahead of time to meet the due dates.**
- You will compose a two-page typed, double-spaced paper for each interview summarizing your informational interview experience. Include the name of the person you interviewed, his or her title, and place of employment. Also include questions you asked, responses you received, and your overall impressions of the career area explored and of your interviewing experience in general. Due dates for the informational interviews are specified on the schedule.

10 points - Job Shadow

Students will complete a job shadow. The due date is specified on the schedule. **Advance planning is very important for activities that require making arrangements with others.**

- Complete 2 hours of job shadowing with a person holding a job similar to your career interest area. Students **may not** job shadow a family member, and the person being shadowed must be employed in the student's field of interest. Remember, you are completing this to get an idea of what someone in the field actually does.
- Describe your job shadow experience in a two to three page paper. Be sure to include the name of the person shadowed, his or her title and place of employment, and what your experience was like. Reflect on how this experience influenced or did not influence your career decision-making process. Use the information in the text on pages 64-67 to assist you in planning, conducting, and summarizing this experience.

20 points – Occupation Summary Papers (2 @ 10 points each)

Students will complete two brief papers reflecting their increased knowledge of two occupations of choice following use of career resources in class. These papers will include integration of self-knowledge with world-of-work knowledge. Further instructions regarding these papers, including the format for the papers and grading criteria, will be given in class.

20 points – Experiential Labs (2 @ 10 points each)

Students will be asked to complete two experiential labs during the semester. Several options will be presented from which students will be allowed to choose activities they prefer. A brief summary of these experiences will be submitted for credit. Instructions and choices will be provided in class.

Grading Scale:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Course Policies:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and arrive promptly. Contact the instructor regarding attendance issues. Absences will be considered unexcused unless they meet the criteria for excused absences as outlined in the Tiger Cub. **Unexcused absences are not allowed, and will negatively impact your grade in this course (see in-class participation requirements). You cannot participate if you are not in class! Incomplete grades will be considered only for university recognized reasons.

Cell phones are to be **TURNED OFF during class.

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Homework and in-class assignments turned in late will receive half credit. Grades for major assignments turned in late will also be reduced. **Hand in all assignments in person, unless instructed otherwise.

****It is your responsibility to keep up with your grade.** Students who receive a grade of C or below at the point of mid-term grades should contact the instructor about plans for improvement on the remaining assignments. Attendance penalties and points missed can add up quickly.

****Auburn University email** is the official means of communication for Auburn students, faculty, and staff. Appointments to meet with the instructor outside of class should be made **by email**. Additionally, students should check their AU email often.

****Students who are eligible for special accommodations should inform the instructor within the first class week to ensure that accommodations can be made in a timely manner.**

** **The syllabus is subject to change with the instructor's view of the students' needs. Students will be given a copy of any changes to the syllabus as early as is feasible.**

Course Schedule – Fall 2006

Class Date	Topics Covered	Assignments Due
August 22	Personal introductions; Syllabus; Completion of preliminary assessments	
August 29	Introduction to the course; groups composed; overview of theories; Primary Life Tasks Wheel	
September 5	Early recollections; family influences; gender role beliefs; societal values	
September 12	Transferable skills; work values; introduction to the SII	*Career Autobiography*
September 19	Interests & Introduction to Discover (meet in LRC lab)	
September 26	Personality & Informational Interviewing	*SII reflection*
October 3	Support Networks; Revisiting the Primary Tasks Wheel	*Personality reflection*
October 10	Putting it all together: Interests, Skills, Personality, & Values	
October 17	Using a Career Library (meet at CDS)	
October 24	Using the Internet (meet in LRC lab)	*Informational Interview 1*
October 31	Making Sense of it All & Decision making	*Information for 2 occupation reports*
November 7	Resumes, Part 1; Networking	*Informational Interview 2*
November 14	In-class resume critiques; Interviewing strategies	*Occupation Reports Due*
November 21	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving	
November 28	Revisiting Primary Life Tasks Wheel	*Job Shadow Due*
December 5	Complete final assessments	*Experiential Lab Summaries Due*

COUN 1000
Lab Assignments

Please choose one (1) activity from Group 1, and one (1) activity from Group 2 to complete this semester. You will need to submit your summaries/write-ups at the end of the semester (see due date on syllabus).

Group 1:

- Read at least 2 books or articles on an activity or subject area of interest to you. Write about what you've learned. [Examples: How-To books, factual information books, biographies of people doing the activity or working in the field of interest]
- Watch a movie or TV show about an occupation of interest. Write about your impressions.
- Write a letter or email to someone whose job you're interested in. Find out how he/she got to be in this position, and what advice he/she has to offer you.
- Look for articles and interviews about someone you admire. Write a summary about the experience. Do you still admire him/her as much? Why or why not? What can you take from this experience? Learn anything new?
- Volunteer in a class to do something you normally wouldn't (e.g., be a group leader, contribute artistic components of a project, give a speech, make a presentation, engage in a discussion). Write about the experience.

Group 2:

- Join a club or organization at AU just because it interests you. Go to meetings. Keep a log of your experiences with the organization.
- Volunteer doing something that is meaningful to you. Keep a log of your experiences.
- Take a part-time job in an area of interest to you. Keep a log of your experiences.
- Plan to try out something you've always wanted to do, and then *do* it. [Examples: making pottery, learning a new language, completing a wilderness hike, cooking a particular dish, using a new fishing method, etc.] Write a brief summary of the experience.

Weekly Article Assignments

One of your group's tasks this semester is to determine an equal division of labor for finding, reading, and presenting weekly current events articles related to career issues. One member of your group should be prepared each week to share with the class a *brief* (1 to 3 minutes) summary of an article related to a present-day career concern. Examples of topics include, but are not limited to:

- Diversity in the workplace (can include issues related to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, political views, group membership, etc.)
- Work-family conflict
- Gender barriers in employment
- Benefits
- Employment law
- Downsizing
- Information Systems/Technology

APPENDIX D:

COURSE EVALUATION FORM

End of Semester Evaluation
COUN 1000
Shannon Salter, M.Ed.

Following are some questions that will assist in guiding the future of this class. Please answer them as honestly and openly as possible. Please understand that your name will not be connected with your responses.

1. Please rank-order the following activities we have completed this semester in terms of *how helpful they were to you,* with "1" being "most helpful" and "11" being "least helpful."

   _____ Informational Interviewing

   _____ Job Shadowing

   _____ Computer-assisted guidance/career information

   _____ Visit to Career Development Services

   _____ Career autobiography

   _____ Strong Interest Inventory

   _____ Personality assessments

   _____ Career journaling/self-reflections

   _____ Lecture materials/presentations

   _____ Small group discussions/activities

   _____ Resume writing

2. Please select the statement below that most reflects your opinion:
   Overall, the COUN 1000 course

   _____ Far exceeded my expectations

   _____ Somewhat exceeded my expectations

   _____ Was about what I expected it to be like

   _____ Was somewhat disappointing

   _____ Was very disappointing

3. Please circle the number below to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

   I would recommend the COUN 1000 course to others.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Please circle the number below to indicate the extent to which **you are now certain about your academic major.**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Certain	Certain	Somewhat Certain	Uncertain	Very Uncertain

5. Please indicate the extent to which **you are now certain about your career plan.**

1	2	3	4	5
Very Certain	Certain	Somewhat Certain	Uncertain	Very Uncertain

6. In regard to your present educational plans, **how certain are you that you will graduate from Auburn University?** Please circle the percentage that reflects your level of certainty.

25% Sure	50% Sure	75% Sure	100% Sure