Career Problems Among Help-Seekers in the United States – An Integrative Approach –

Kathy P. Zamostny · Karen M. O’Brien

〈Abstract〉

The current research sought to examine further the integration of career and non-career domains by studying the career problems of 307 help-seekers from three campus agencies (counseling center, academic skills center, career center) at a large eastern university in the United States. Career problems, in turn, were studied in relation to psychodynamic antecedents (i.e., early attachments and self development) and psychological adjustment (i.e., academic, affective, self, interpersonal). Our findings indicated that career problems coexisted with mental health and academic problems for all help-seekers, thereby suggesting the importance of understanding their interrelationships for career theory and interventions. Additionally, attachment processes and problems in the development of the self were related to career difficulties. The implications of these findings for the practice of career counseling are discussed.

Key Words: Career problems, attachment and self development, academic concerns, college students, career counseling

1) An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 108th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC. Gratitude is extended to Meredith Tomlinson, Stanley Hunt, Cathy Auckland, Meghan Davidson, Kim Gerber, Shelley Brown, and Marianne Dunn for their assistance with data collection and entry. Funding for this study was provided by the Department of Psychology, the Counseling Center, and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Maryland. Dr. Kathy Zamostny is deceased; correspondence regarding this paper should be addressed to Dr. Karen O’Brien, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Email: kmobrien@umd.edu

- Date of submission: April, 9, 2013
- Date of confirmation: May, 27, 2013
Career counseling for college students is arguably more important than ever. There are increasing academic and career pressures on students as well as increasing demands on universities to retain students and to promote timely graduation. For many students, obstacles arise that impede successful choice of a major, thereby having adverse effects on such things as academic functioning (e.g., grade point average, retention), career functioning (e.g., career decision-making self-efficacy, vocational exploration), and affective functioning (e.g., anxiety, depression, self-esteem). Career counseling, which can provide assistance to such students, rests on an understanding of career problems and the factors which give rise to them. Research (Blustein & Spengler, 1995; Lucas, 1992; Rottinghaus, Jenkins, & Jantzer, 2009; Walker & Peterson, 2012) as well as clinical experience (Lenz, Peterson, Reardon, & Saunders, 2010), however, suggest that many college student help-seekers simultaneously experience career, academic, and mental health difficulties that need to be considered in career counseling. The coexistence and interaction of career and mental health problems support the argument of many career researchers that the artificial dichotomy that persists in conceptualizing career versus mental health problems needs to give way to an integrated approach (Betz & Corning, 1993; Blustein, 2008; Blustein & Spengler, 1995; Krumboltz, 1993; Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Zunker, 2008). Even researchers who caution against equating career counseling with psychotherapy suggest that career research needs to address such questions as when to focus on non-career issues and what types of emotional issues are important to consider
(Brown & Krane, 2000).

Consistent with the spirit of integration, several psychodynamic models have been applied to the career development and decision making of college students. One psychodynamic theory that has been used to better understand career development is attachment theory. Central to attachment theory is the idea that secure attachments promote confidence and affective self-regulation in a child, thus allowing for the active exploration of the environment that paves the way for psychological development and adjustment (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982). On the other hand, if a child’s attachments are anxious-ambivalent or avoidant, then problems in exploration and subsequent development can arise. Career development theorists, in turn, have suggested that secure attachments may promote the exploration of self and occupational environment that is necessary for career decision-making (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995). Several studies have supported the notion that attachment variables are predictive of career choice variables. For example, O’Brien (1996) found that attachment to mother along with independence from father were predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy, career orientation, and incongruent career choices during high school and attachment to father was salient in the career self-efficacy and career aspirations of young women after graduation from college (O’Brien, Friedman, Tipton, & Linn, 2000). Among college students, attachment relationships were related positively to making progress in committing to career choices and inversely to the tendency to foreclose (Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Palladino, 1991) as
well as to career maturity (Lee & Hughey, 2001). More recently, Wright and Perrone (2010) noted that career decision-making self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between attachment and life satisfaction among college students.

Another psychodynamic theory that has been linked to college student career development processes is Kohut’s self theory (1971, 1977), which specifies two important lines of development in explaining the self-grandiosity and idealization. Healthy grandiosity (leading to mature ambition) develops out of empathic connections with a caregiver whereas healthy idealization (resulting in mature goal setting) develops when caregivers are available to meet the child’s needs for idealizing objects. Robbins and Patton (1982, 1985) argued that mature ambition (grandiosity) allows an individual to realistically engage in self-assessment and to pursue a course of action based on that assessment. Thus, problems in this line of development would be reflected in diminished ability to carry out plans. On the other hand, mature goal setting (idealizing) rests on a coherent set of values and goals which helps to specify alternatives to be considered. Problems in this line of development would result in indecisiveness. Robbins and Patton (1985) constructed self-report scales of grandiosity (Superiority Scale) and idealization (Goal Instability Scale) and found that both scales predicted career decidedness following participation in a 10-week career class. Robinson and Cooper (1988) found that goal instability was related to vocational decision-making uncertainty and to career choice satisfaction, however, superiority was not.

The current research sought to examine the presence of career
problems among actual help-seekers in three campus agencies (counseling center, academic skills center, career center) at a large eastern university in the United States. Career problems, in turn, were studied in relation to psychodynamic antecedents (i.e., early attachments and self development) and psychological adjustment (i.e., academic, affective, self, interpersonal). Consistent with previous research that demonstrated the coexistence of career and mental health difficulties, we hypothesized that help-seekers from all sites would report similar levels of career and adjustment problems and career problems would be related to a wide range of adjustment difficulties. In light of the research linking psychodynamic variables to career development processes for college students, we also hypothesized that attachment and self variables would be correlated with career problems.

I. Method

1. Participants

Participants were 307 undergraduate college students at a large eastern university. All participants sought help from a counseling center (N=81), academic skills center (N=107), or career center (N=119). The counseling center clients received individual therapy related to a wide variety of problems whereas the academic skills center provided individual and group assistance focused on learning, study and testing concerns; the career center addressed vocational
development and job attainment in individual counseling, career development courses, and group workshops. Participants volunteered to complete a packet of questionnaires that took 45 minutes, and were paid $5 to $10 for their participation. The mean age of the participants was 19.65 (SD=1.58) and they were predominantly women (55%). The sample was mostly White (54%) with the remaining participants representing racial and ethnic groups (African American 20%, Asian American 13%, Hispanic 6%, Native American .3%, Biracial 1%, Other 5%, Missing data .7%).

2. Procedure

Volunteers were solicited during intake sessions, on-going counseling sessions, and during student development classes (e.g., career classes). If interested in participating, students were given the research packet and asked to complete the questionnaires immediately if possible or to return the packet within 48 hours. Reminder phone calls were made to students who failed to return the packets within a week.

3. Instruments

Psychodynamic antecedents. The psychodynamic antecedents of attachment and self development were assessed. First, attachment was measured by the mother and father attachment subscales of the revised version of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987, 1989). Each
subscale consisted of 25 items that measured attachment as assigned by degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation. Participants indicated their agreement with each of the items on a 5-point scale that ranged from “almost never or never true” (1) to “almost always or always true” (5). Example items included “My mother understands me” and “I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest.” Participants were instructed to answer the items for their mother or the person who has acted as their mother. If more than one person acted in that role (e.g., stepmother and biological mother), they were asked to respond to the items for the person who has most influenced them. These instructions were repeated for the father items (inserting father or stepfather). After reverse scoring several items, the items for each scale were summed with high scores indicating strong levels of attachment.

In previous studies, internal consistencies of .89 and .88 (Papini, Roggman, & Anderson, 1991), and .96 and .95 (O’Brien, 1996) were reported for the mother and father scales, respectively. The attachment to mother scale was related in the expected direction to psychological separation from mother and attachment to father (O’Brien et al., 2000). Moreover, attachment to father also demonstrated relations with psychological separation from father and attachment to mother (O’Brien et al., 2000).

Self development was assessed using the Superiority and Goal Instability Scales (Robbins & Patton, 1985). The measure included two scales, each of which consisted of 10 items. Participants responded to these items on a scale from “strongly agree” (1) to
“strongly disagree” (6). The Superiority scale assessed a less mature form of grandiosity and an opinion of superiority when compared with others (e.g., “I know that I have more natural talents than most”). The Goal Instability scale measured a lack of goal directedness and feelings of inhibition related to work (e.g., “I don’t seem to have the drive to get my work done”). Several items were reverse scored and scale scores were obtained by summing the items on each scale. Low scores indicated strong levels of superiority and goal instability.

Robbins and Patton (1985) reported internal consistency reliability estimates of .76 and .81 for the Superiority and Goal Instability scales, respectively. Moreover, the Superiority scale was correlated positively with a measure of narcissism and extraversion, and negatively with age (Robbins & Patton, 1985). These authors also found that the Goal Instability scale was negatively correlated with self-esteem, career decidedness, and a scale assessing personal competencies.

**Career problems.** Career problems were measured by both the Career Factors Inventory (Chartrand, Robbins, & Morrill, 1997; Chartrand, Robbins, Morrill, & Boggs, 1990), and the Career Problems subscale of the College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991). The Career Factors Inventory consisted of two information scales (Need for Career Information and Need for Self-Knowledge) and two personal-emotional scales (Career Choice Anxiety and Generalized Indecisiveness). On all of the scales, the items were summed and high scores indicated strong levels of the construct being measured.
The Need for Career Information scale included six items to which participants responded on a scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). An example item on this scale was “Before choosing or entering a particular career area, I need to talk to people in one or more occupations.” An internal consistency reliability estimate of .73 was obtained for this scale and the scale was correlated negatively with vocational identity (Chartrand et al., 1990).

The Need for Self-Knowledge scale consisted of four items on a scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). For example, “Before choosing or entering a particular career area, I need to answer, who am I?” appeared on this scale. The internal consistency reliability estimate for this scale was .83 and validity was supported by a negative correlation between this scale and vocational identity (Chartrand et al., 1990).

The Career Choice Anxiety scale consisted of six items to which participants were provided with the sentence stem “When I think about actually deciding for sure what I want my career to be, I feel” and two adjectives on either end of a 5-point scale (e.g., confident (1), frightened (5)). An internal consistency coefficient alpha of .86 was reported and support for the validity of this scale was demonstrated by a correlation with a measure of anxiety (Chartrand et al., 1990).

The Generalized Indecisiveness scale included five items, three of which began with the sentence stem, “For me, decision making seems,” and two of which began with “While making most decisions, I am.” Participants selected one of two adjectives for
each item on a scale from 1 to 5 (e.g., certain (1), uncertain (5)). One item was reverse scored and the items were summed with high scores equating strong levels of indecisiveness. The reported internal consistency reliability estimate for this scale was .79 and relations with a measure of goal instability provided support for validity (Chartrand et al., 1990).

The Career Problems subscale of the College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991) also was used to assess difficulties with career and will be described in the following section.

**Psychological adjustment.** Psychological adjustment was assessed using the College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991). The following nine scales comprise the measure: Anxiety (e.g., “I feel tense much of the time”), Depression (e.g., “Lately, I feel sad or blue most of the time”), Suicidal Ideation (e.g., “I’ve thought about how I would take my life”), Substance Abuse (e.g., “I’ve missed classes or work because I partied the night before”), Self-Esteem Problems (e.g., “I feel good about myself”), Interpersonal Problems (e.g., “I have close and satisfying relationships”), Family Problems (e.g., “My family doesn’t understand me”), Academic Problems (e.g., “I never find the time to study”), and Career Problems (e.g., “I don’t know how to go about selecting a career”). Participants responded to 108 items (12 items per subscale) on a scale that ranged from “false or not true at all” (1) to “very true” (4). Several items were reverse scored and then items on each scale were summed. High scores corresponded to strong levels of distress and problems with adjustment.

Internal reliability coefficients ranged from .80 to .92 for the
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College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991). Reed (1991) provided support for the validity of this measure by correlating the scales with inventories assessing related constructs (e.g., anxiety, depression, grade point average, interpersonal problems, self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse, family problems, and career goal indecision). Moreover, Anton and Reed (1991) used the College Adjustment Scales to discriminate between students receiving counseling and those not in counseling. Finally, support for the concurrent validity of the College Adjustment Scales was found as eight of the nine scales correlated in the expected direction with the MMPI-2 College Maladjustment Scale (Campbell, Palmieri, & Lasch, 2006).

II. Results

The means and standard deviations for the measures for each sample of help seekers can be found in Table 1. The means, standard deviations, ranges, reliability coefficients, and correlations for all measured variables for the combined sample can be found in Table 2. Three multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were run to assess differences among groups of help seekers on psychodynamic antecedents, career problems, and adjustment difficulties. Post hoc analyses of variances (ANOVA) with the Scheffe procedure were used when the MANOVA was significant.

We first hypothesized that help seekers would experience similar levels of career and adjustment problems, regardless of their
identification as counseling center, career center or academic skills center clients. As predicted, no differences were found on career problems among the three groups \((F(10, 602)=2.42, p .01)\).

<Table 1> Means and Standard Deviations for Measures for All Groups of Help-Seekers

| Scale                     | Counseling Center \((N=81)\) | Career Center \((N=119)\) | Academic Services \((N=107)\) |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Attachment to Mother   | 90.25 (21.32)                | 96.85 (19.02)             | 100.32 (15.76)              |
| 2. Attachment to Father   | 78.85 (21.12)                | 84.71 (20.75)             | 89.00 (21.32)               |
| 3. Superiority            | 32.96 (7.13)                 | 31.19 (8.27)              | 31.81 (7.89)                |
| 4. Goal Instability       | 36.20 (8.57)                 | 39.31 (10.00)             | 38.95 (9.35)                |
| 5. Need for Career Information | 23.82 (4.23)                | 24.21 (4.24)              | 23.61 (4.23)                |
| 6. Need for Self-Knowledge | 17.11 (2.90)                | 16.49 (3.22)              | 16.22 (3.45)                |
| 7. Career Choice Anxiety  | 18.10 (5.33)                 | 17.89 (5.72)              | 16.13 (5.21)                |
| 8. Generalized Indecisiveness | 15.67 (3.48)                | 15.49 (3.99)              | 14.24 (3.53)                |
| 9. Anxiety                | 27.50 (8.51)                 | 23.42 (7.47)              | 22.35 (6.89)                |
| 10. Depression             | 25.54 (8.98)                 | 22.47 (7.83)              | 20.55 (6.25)                |
| 11. Suicidal Ideation     | 15.67 (6.25)                 | 14.24 (3.68)              | 14.74 (4.25)                |
| 12. Substance Abuse       | 15.09 (5.24)                 | 16.93 (7.07)              | 16.28 (5.88)                |
| 13. Self-Esteem Problems  | 27.43 (8.31)                 | 23.71 (7.02)              | 23.16 (6.57)                |
| 14. Interpersonal Problems | 24.83 (7.10)                 | 22.33 (6.81)              | 22.04 (6.19)                |
| 15. Academic Problems     | 26.31 (8.02)                 | 25.77 (8.51)              | 26.17 (6.93)                |
| 16. Family Problems       | 22.73 (7.80)                 | 19.67 (6.32)              | 18.95 (5.27)                |
| 17. Career Problems       | 22.17 (8.86)                 | 24.80 (9.68)              | 22.63 (8.47)                |
### Table 2: Bivariate Correlations of Scales and Internal Consistency Estimates, Scale Ranges, Means and Standard Deviations

| Measure                      | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    | 9    | 10   | 11   | 12   | 13   | 14   | 15   | 16   | 17   |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Attachment to Mother      | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2. Attachment to Father      | .45  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 3. Superiority               | -.10 | -.06 | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 4. Goal Instability          | .31  | .17  | .06  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 5. Need for Career Information | .08  | .07  | -.18 | -.12 | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 6. Need for Self-Knowledge   | .06  | .04  | -.21 | -.10 | .52  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 7. Career Choice Anxiety     | -.23 | -.09 | .01  | -.53 | .26  | .19  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 8. Generalized Indecisiveness | -.21 | -.11 | .11  | -.40 | .11  | .11  | .54  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 9. Anxiety                   | -.37 | -.25 | -.04 | -.54 | -.01 | .13  | .33  | .33  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 10. Depression               | -.38 | -.30 | .02  | -.36 | -.01 | .06  | .35  | .33  | .84  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 11. Suicidal Ideation        | -.41 | -.24 | .06  | -.32 | -.02 | .08  | .20  | .19  | .51  | .57  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 12. Substance Abuse          | -.11 | -.09 | -.13 | -.24 | -.03 | -.03 | .17  | .00  | .22  | .25  | .19  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 13. Self-Esteem Problems     | -.47 | -.28 | .24  | -.30 | -.03 | .00  | .43  | .46  | .68  | .73  | .53  | .17  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |
| 14. Interpersonal Problems   | -.49 | -.35 | -.07 | -.45 | -.07 | .09  | .30  | .28  | .73  | .71  | .52  | .25  | .66  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |
| 15. Academic Problems        | -.27 | -.20 | -.04 | -.60 | .03  | .00  | .31  | .29  | .57  | .59  | .32  | .33  | .51  | .47  | 1.00 |      |      |      |
| 16. Family Problems          | -.67 | -.46 | -.02 | -.39 | -.01 | .07  | .22  | .19  | .59  | .60  | .50  | .15  | .53  | .63  | .44  | 1.00 |      |      |
| 17. Career Problems          | -.18 | -.07 | .00  | -.57 | .27  | .13  | .63  | .36  | .37  | .40  | .29  | .21  | .40  | .31  | .44  | .27  | 1.00 |      |
| Scale Alpha                  | .56  | .96  | .79  | .84  | .78  | .83  | .89  | .74  | .89  | .86  | .87  | .91  | .89  | .95  | .90  | .85  | .94  |      |
| M of Scale                   | 96.32| 84.66| 31.87| 38.36| 23.90| 16.56| 17.33| 15.10| 24.12| 22.61| 14.79| 16.22| 24.50| 22.89| 26.05| 20.23| 23.35|
| SD of Scale                  | 18.97| 21.35| 7.85 | 9.47 | 4.23 | 3.23 | 3.74 | 7.82 | 7.87 | 4.69 | 6.24 | 7.42 | 6.76 | 7.84 | 6.58 | 9.10 |      |
| Range                        | 36-125|29-125|12-60 |16-60 |6-30 |4-20 |6-30 |5-24 |12-48 |13-48 |12-40 |12-45 |12-46 |12-46 |12-46 |12-46 |12-48 |

Note: The level of confidence for coefficients greater than or equal to $+/-.16$ is at least .01.
Contrary to our hypotheses, the results of the second MANOVA suggested that there were differences in psychological adjustment among the three groups of help-seekers as demonstrated by the Pillais V ($F(16, 596)=3.84, p < .01$). Univariate F-tests suggested that differences occurred in anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and family problems. The counseling center clients did not differ from clients seen at the career center or at academic skills center on measures of interpersonal problems, academic problems, suicidal ideation, or substance abuse. However, the Scheffe procedure revealed that the counseling center clients had higher levels of anxiety and self-esteem problems than the other two groups of clients, and counseling center clients had higher levels of depression and family problems than the academic skills center clients.

We also investigated differences among the groups on the psychodynamic antecedents. Examination of the Pillais V indicated that there were differences among the three groups on two psychodynamic antecedents ($F(8, 604)=2.69, p < .01$). The univariate F-tests indicated that differences were found in attachment to mother and father. The results of the Scheffe procedure suggested that clients seen at the counseling center had lower levels of attachment to mother and father than those clients who requested assistance from the academic skills center.

Four correlation matrices were calculated to assess relations among the variables of interest in this study for each group of help-seekers and for the total combined sample. The pattern of correlations for the combined sample was very similar to the patterns of correlations for the three separate samples of
help-seekers, thus results of the combined correlation matrix will be discussed. For all analyses, the alpha value was set at .01 to control for experimentwise error.

Support was found for the hypothesis that career problems would be related to adjustment difficulties. Specifically, career problems as measured by the College Adjustment Scales and by the Career Factors Inventory Career Choice Anxiety and Generalized Indecisiveness scales were related to anxiety, interpersonal problems, depression, self-esteem problems, academic difficulties, suicidal ideation, and family problems. Moreover, substance abuse problems were related to career problems as measured by the College Adjustment Scales and by Career Choice Anxiety. The Need for Career Information and Need for Self-Knowledge scales were not related to any of these adjustment difficulties.

In terms of psychodynamic antecedents, career problems were correlated with difficulties with attachment and self development. Specifically, low levels of attachment to mother were related to high levels of career problems, career choice anxiety and generalized indecisiveness. The global assessment of career problems also demonstrated a negative correlation with goal instability. Career choice anxiety and generalized indecisiveness evidenced a similar pattern of relations, both being negatively correlated with goal instability. No correlations were found between career problems, career choice anxiety, generalized indecisiveness and superiority. With regard to the Need for Career Information scale, a negative correlation with superiority emerged. The Need for Self-Knowledge scale also was related negatively to superiority.
III. Discussion

In general, these results argue for the integration of career and mental health issues in the assessment and treatment of career problems. Career problems coexisted with mental health and academic problems for all help-seekers, thereby suggesting the importance of understanding their interrelationships for career theory and practice. Additionally, attachment processes and problems in the development of the self were related to career difficulties, and thus these findings have important implications for career counseling.

1. Help-Seeker Comparisons

We found partial support for our hypothesis that predicted similar levels of career and adjustment problems for all help-seekers (i.e., counseling center, academic skills center, career center). As expected the three groups of help-seekers did not differ in level of career problems. This finding suggests that students who are seen at different campus agencies, even though these agencies presumably treat different problems, are all experiencing career-related difficulties. Perhaps service providers on college campuses should be better educated about how to recognize career problems and how to refer clients to appropriate services. As will be seen later, career problems are linked to psychological difficulties; thus early and comprehensive interventions could assist
students in resolving career-related issues and avoiding mental health concerns.

Whereas the three groups of help-seekers reported similar levels of career problems, there were differences among the groups on some adjustment problems with counseling center clients reporting highest levels on some scales, academic skills clients reporting the lowest levels, and the career center clients falling in-between. In particular, counseling center help-seekers reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and family problems than academic skills help-seekers and higher levels of anxiety and self-esteem problems than career center clients. Counseling center clients also were less attached to both of their parents when compared to the students seeking assistance for academic concerns. Academic skills and career center help-seekers did not differ from each other on the adjustment variables. It should be noted that all of the groups, however, appeared to have higher means on these adjustment variables (with the exception of family problems) than the normative data, although these differences were not tested statistically.

The differences among our three groups of help-seekers on a subset of adjustment scales may point to emotional variables that are important to consider in delineating types of career problems. Perhaps higher levels of anxiety, depression, self-esteem and family problems can help career counselors and theorists recognize when to address non-career issues and which emotional issues to focus on—two key questions raised by Brown and Krane (2000). The differences among the three groups of help-seekers, between the
counseling clients and academic skills clients in particular, may point to a progression in the development of mental health problems associated with career difficulties. More specifically, students with career problems may seek help first for academic problems and, if the underlying difficulties are not addressed, emotional distress might increase. This finding has implications for the importance of early detection of career problems and prevention of subsequent emotional problems and also for the importance of training various campus help-givers in career-related topics.

In addition to the above differences, the three groups of help-seekers did not differ on four other adjustment scales: interpersonal problems, academic problems, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse. Suicidal ideation and substance abuse were lower frequency problems across all groups which could reflect biases in reporting or actual base rates of these problems. Interpersonal problems and especially academic problems, however, seem to be difficulties that are common for all help-seekers.

Overall, these results suggest that regardless of whether a help-seeker presents for help with counseling-related difficulties, academic difficulties, or career difficulties, career and non-career issues coexist and potentially interact. These findings replicate other studies that have shown that college student help-seekers simultaneously experience career and non-career problems (Blustein & Spengler, 1995; Lucas, 1992; Rottinghaus, Jenkins, & Jantzer, 2009; Walker & Peterson, 2012) and support the need to better understand the interplay of these variables in providing career assistance to help-seekers. It also is important to note that
counseling center clients reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, self-esteem problems, and family difficulties—suggesting that the career and mental health needs of these clients might be more intense than the other groups.

2. Career Problems and Adjustment Problems

Correlational analyses using the entire sample supported the second hypothesis that predicted relations among career problems and adjustment difficulties. More specifically, career choice anxiety and generalized indecisiveness were related to almost all of the adjustment variables, whereas the need for career information and the need for self-knowledge were not. These results are consistent with research and/or theoretical models that suggest different clusters of career clients: some clients having straight-forward developmental needs for information and decision-making help and others having career problems directly related to high levels of anxiety or long-standing psychological difficulties (Blustein, 2008; Brown & Krane, 2002; Chartrand et al., 1990; Lucas & Epperson, 1988; Lucas & Epperson, 1990).

Moreover, these results argue for an integrated approach to career counseling. Students who are experiencing anxiety, depression, self-esteem problems, and family difficulties along with career choice anxiety and global career problems should not be treated solely with a rational–cognitive model that focuses on obtaining information about self and the world of work. Traditional methods of career counseling would be inappropriate for this
population. Instead, students suffering from a combination of career and mental health problems should be seen by trained therapists who can simultaneously address the career and psychological problems present in this individual. Only through a comprehensive method of treatment can this complex set of problems most likely be ameliorated. These results and conclusions are consistent with the argument expressed by Osipow (1999) in which he contrasts traditional cognitive-based approaches of career counseling for developmental indecision problems with a psychotherapy approach to career counseling. He suggested that psychotherapy may be more appropriate and effective for career problems that are related to chronic indecisiveness; that is, for career problems that likely have roots in personality antecedents.

3. Psychodynamic Antecedents and Career Problems

The third hypothesis also was supported as relationships between career problems and psychodynamic antecedents were demonstrated in this sample. More specifically, attachment to mother was correlated with global career problems, career choice anxiety and general indecisiveness. Interestingly, attachment to father was not related to these salient career variables. This result replicates other findings that point to the important of attachment to a significant other in explaining aspects of career development (O’Brien et al., 2000) and suggests a potentially useful theoretical perspective in treating the cluster of career clients who seem to be more psychologically impaired. In other words, working on attachment
conflicts in the context of the therapy relationship might be an important foundation for interventions with career clients who demonstrate insecure attachments. For example, individuals who have avoidant attachments might exhibit resistance to counseling that needs to be understood and constructively addressed for counseling to be effective.

Career choice anxiety and general indecisiveness also were related to goal instability but not to superiority, thus supporting previous research that links problems in the idealizing line of development to career decision-making (Robbins & Patton, 1985; Robinson & Cooper, 1988). Similar to the attachment findings presented above, the importance of goal instability in predicting serious career problems suggests that relationship counseling focused on repairing the idealizing line of development would be a useful career counseling approach with some help-seekers.

Several limitations arose in this study that was the first to address psychodynamic antecedents, career problems, and mental health concerns of three groups of college help-seekers in the United States. First, the sample, although reflective of the university from which data was collected, was predominately White. Therefore, additional data should be collected from students of color prior to generalization of these results. Second, the data were self-report in nature, which calls into question the accuracy of the results and the validity of drawing conclusions about constructs concerning client history. Last, the number of participants from the counseling center was lower than that from the career center and academic skills center which could have limited the power of the
analyses.

In conclusion, these findings argue for an integrative approach to the assessment and treatment of career problems, although further research is necessary to better understand the interactions between career and mental health variables. Moreover, an understanding of coexisting mental health variables with career problems can not only further knowledge of career problems and interventions, but also offer useful interventions for the treatment of psychological problems. For example, when counseling a client who has serious impairment in self-functioning, career interventions might prove useful in promoting self-development. Finally, the significant relations between career problems and both attachment and self development argue for additional research identifying the specific psychodynamic variables that affect a range of career problems. Longitudinal studies using path or modeling analyses are necessary to determine casual relationships among the psychodynamic antecedents, career problems, and adjustment difficulties for a sample of rarely studied individuals, help-seekers on a college campus.
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