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This paper sets forth the main principles of a theory of advising. This theory, explained more fully later in the paper, holds advising to be fundamentally a learning activity in which students intentionally and reflectively integrate their academic learning into an education that is a coherent whole. I am calling it the integrative learning theory.

The theory itself is not entirely original to the present paper: it builds on work previously published by Hemwall and Trachte (1999/2009; 2005) and by Lowenstein (2005/2009; 2011). But I believe we should revisit the ideas in those papers within the context of clarifying (1) what a theory of advising is, and (2) how a theory should be evaluated. Accordingly, before I can explain this theory and argue its merits, I need to lay considerable groundwork regarding the role of theory in advising. I do not believe there is a satisfactory account of this matter in the literature, so this portion of the paper will be more original than the theory itself, and I believe it should be useful to readers whether they accept my theory or not.

One reason to create such a theory is the need to articulate advising as a distinct field of practice and thought, as Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008); Shaffer, Zalewski, and Leveille (2010); and Himes (2014) have argued in different ways. I will call this proposition the "autonomy principle." Especially as initially articulated by Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008), the autonomy principle holds that defining advising through metaphors and analogies to other fields hinders its emergence as a distinct field of practice and scholarship. That manner of defining advising in fact obscures its uniqueness from its own practitioners. As I will show, it has also been an obstacle not only to the emergence of a theory of advising, but even to a general understanding of what such a theory is.

My initial answer to this question will be generic for reasons that will soon be clear.

A theory consists of very general ideas in any discipline that serve as foundations or in some cases explanations for more particular facts and ideas and which guide inquiry in that discipline.

Many people in the advising field, when contemplating theories, think first and foremost of theories in the social and behavioral sciences. These are the theories that advisers are most likely to have encountered in their own education and training. But theories are found everywhere—not only in the sciences but in the humanities, arts, and professional fields. There are theories in philosophy, music, mathematics,

accountancy, and probably in every intellectual discipline, though I will not attempt to substantiate that. In fact Bothamley (2002) catalogues more than 5,000 theories belonging to twenty-eight very different fields of study.

Why is this plethora of theories important? Because theories outside the sciences "work" differently than theories in the social sciences (and the natural sciences as well). Theories in different disciplines have different epistemologies—that is, scholars in those disciplines use different methods and criteria to create and evaluate the theories they study. If one has worked exclusively with theories from the social sciences, one may have an overly narrow understanding of the purpose of a theory and how to assess its merits. This is the reason for the very generic definition of "theory" given above.

Advisers and writers about advising cite and use many theories in their work and in their writings, but most of these are not *theories of advising*, as I will use that expression. For example, theories of human development such as that of Erikson (1963) or Chickering and Reisser (1993), or theories of cognitive development, such as Kohlberg's (1969) or Perry's (1970), are not theories of advising, even though they may be very useful to advisers. These theories of development and many others (moral, identity, self-authorship, type, …) belong to the social sciences, and they attempt to explain and predict human behavior in many settings, of which advising is only one. Just as professionals in many other fields may find these theories useful, advisers may use social science theories to predict how advising practices will affect students or explain why students respond in certain ways to their experiences. These theories may also help to explain or predict the behavior of advisers themselves. Theories of human behavior that are well established may also suggest new strategies and techniques for advisers to try. But the most important point here is that these theories do not accomplish what a theory of advising needs to do, which is to distinguish advising as a unique field of practice and of thought.

Recently advisers with backgrounds outside the social sciences have brought theories from their own home disciplines into the discussion. For example there is growing interest in hermeneutics (Champlin-Scharff, 2010), which may offer tools to assist us in understanding our students. But hermeneutics, like Perry's theory of student development (1970), is not a theory of advising even though it is a theory that may be very useful to advisers. For the sake of convenience I will call the theories from other fields that are theories in advising but not theories of advising "instrumental theories."

What the instrumental theories from the social sciences and those from the humanities have in common is that they offer us useful ideas about how to advise. They do so because (a) they tell us what transitions students are experiencing and how they are likely to respond to them or to interventions we might consider, or (b) they offer us insight into the students' experience, or our own, or our interactions with them. These theories (as well as many other theories that advisers cite) are not specific to advising, and they can be used to explain and understand human activity in many other realms of life. Accordingly they do not help us distinguish advising from other activities or to understand it as a unique field of practice and scholarship. I believe the task of a theory of advising is precisely that.

I do not believe this particular point receives enough attention from Hagen & Jordan (2008), who offer an

otherwise excellent catalogue of the theories that have been most useful to advisers. Accordingly, a reader of that essay may conclude there are so many theories *in* the advising field that it would be foolhardy to propose there should be a single theory *of* advising. Such an argument is a non sequitur, however: Even though there may be many ideas that advisers reference in their work, it does not follow that there is no single concept setting their work apart as a distinct field of practice and thought. My explanation in the next section of what I mean by a theory *of* advising will help to clarify the latter point.

On this issue I disagree in part with Shaffer et al. (2010), who, citing Hagen and Jordan and others, claimed that the "knowledge base for theory in academic advising" can be supplied adequately with ideas from such disciplines as "psychology, sociology, education, counseling, and psychotherapy" (p. 74). I do fully agree that such disciplines provide useful knowledge to advisers; however, those disciplines do not help identify the essential nature of advising that distinguishes it from other fields as an area of practice and thought. So they do not help us formulate a theory *of* advising.

In support of their position, Shaffer et al. (2010) offered an analogy that fails to prove what they intended. The analogy relates to the field of nursing, which—like advising—derives some of its knowledge base from other fields, in this case biology, nutrition, epidemiology, and so forth. But those fields do not help us understand what identifies nursing as a distinct field of practice and thought. How is the work of nurses different from that of physicians, nurse's aides, and physician assistants? The answer to that question does not lie in biology or epidemiology. In fact, however, there are theories of nursing that do address this question, as for example Roy (1980) proposed.

What then is a theory *of* advising, as opposed to a theory *in* advising? I submit that a theory of advising is identified by two main qualities that the instrumental theories mentioned above lack. First, it identifies advising as a distinctive field of practice and thought and differentiates advising from other fields that may be similar in some ways. A theory of advising does this by identifying the essential, as opposed to incidental, characteristics of advising. The essential/incidental distinction comes from philosophy and has been employed there since Aristotle's time, as Guthrie explained (1990, p. 148). To explain it, perhaps too simplistically, essential characteristics of advising would be those characteristics that *make* it advising, characteristics without which it would not be advising. Incidental characteristics are those that advising may sometimes have, or may often have, but that are not necessary to its being advising. For example, at my former institution advisers used to sign off on students' graduation applications, but I believe we would all agree they would still be advisers even if the rules changed and they no longer needed to do this. So the first question a theory of advising will try to answer is what are the essential characteristics of advising that distinguish it from other practices, such as classroom teaching or personal counseling?

The second main quality of a theory of advising that sharply distinguishes it from the many other theories *in* advising is that a theory *of* advising is *normative*, a point I believe was first cogently argued by Himes (2014, p. 13). In that respect it is most clearly different from the social science theories to which advisers refer. The latter, like any scientific theory, are generally understood to be testable in one way or another. That is to say, we determine whether they are good theories by how accurately they describe/predict/explain how the world—or the part of the world they deal with—actually behaves.

Normative theories, on the other hand, do not purport to describe, predict, or explain phenomena. Rather, they *pre*scribe what ought to happen, or what would ideally happen. Normative theories are found commonly in ethics, in the arts, and in political philosophy. For example an ethical theory might state that among other things, people ought to be truthful. In saying this, it is neither claiming that people are truthful nor predicting that they will be. The fact—for sadly, it is one—that people are frequently not truthful does not disprove this ethical theory. We *might* reject the theory if we thought it didn't provide a clear enough reason why people should be truthful, or if it allowed for no exceptions at all and we believed that deception is permissible under certain circumstances. The literature on ethics is full of detailed discussions of such matters. But people debating ethical theories do so with the knowledge that they are discussing what ought to be the case, not what is.

A normative theory of advising will be a statement of the ultimate purpose of advising, of what advising *ideally should be*, not necessarily what advising actually is. To provide an advising example parallel to the ethics one just discussed, when Crookston (1972/1994/2009) promoted developmental advising as preferable to prescriptive advising, he did not claim that the advising he saw around him was developmental. Quite the contrary, he knew it often was not. He was saying advising ought to be developmental, or ideally would be. His purpose was to urge advisers to adopt a new view of the essential nature of advising. I doubt anyone reading his article mistook his purpose in this regard.

Since normative theories are not testable the way scientific theories are, there must be another way we evaluate them. Below, I will use examples from the arts to illustrate how that might work, or what we might call "the epistemology of normative theories." First I need to flesh out the picture of what a normative theory of advising would do. A normative theory of advising would exhort rather than describe or predict. It would hold up an ideal toward which advisers should strive, rather than try to say what they actually do. Accordingly, in addition to identifying advising as a distinct area of practice and thought by identifying its essential purposes, a normative theory of advising would also imply:

- principles that could be used to describe what is good or bad performance in the field (since if advising is ideally X—whatever X may be—then the best advising will presumably be the "most X," and advising that fails to do X isn't as good);
- the reasons advising is valuable and why colleges and universities should support and reward it (assuming that X is something universities value);
- the foundations of a program of outcomes assessment in advising (since, again, if advising is supposed to accomplish X, we will assess it by seeing how much X it accomplishes);
- even, perhaps, answers to practical questions about who should advise, how they should be educated, and to whom at the university they should answer.

Writers often refer to our area of study as theory and philosophy of advising. That expression naturally invites the question "what is the difference between a theory of advising and a philosophy of advising?" My answer may seem surprising: When we are thinking of "theory" as referring to the instrumental theories from the social sciences and the humanities discussed above, there is considerable difference. But when we understand "theory of advising" as I have suggested, I believe it is actually synonymous with "philosophy of advising." Capturing the essential nature and purpose of an activity and defining a vision of what that activity ideally should be could as easily be called a philosophy of the activity or a theory of it.

Occasionally advisers discuss whether a "unified theory" of advising is possible, or desirable. Before we can discuss this question, we need to distinguish two quite different things the expression "unified theory" might mean.

A comprehensive theory. By a unified theory we might mean a comprehensive theory—that is, a theory that applies to all advising, at any institution, for any student. The very idea of such an ambitious goal may seem to be too outrageous for serious consideration. It is dismissed without detailed argument by Hagen and Jordan (2008, p. 32) and by Shaffer et al. (2010, p. 74). But let us examine the issue more deliberately.

Indeed, there is great variety in advising. Institutions differ in mission, from research universities to community colleges, liberal arts institutions to professional schools. Students may be male or female, traditional aged or older, coming from a wide variety of ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds. Some are military veterans; some are athletes. Advisers themselves differ: Some are faculty and others are full-time advisers; some find their way to the field from another career path, while others have had advising as their career goal from the start. Regardless, I do not think we should dismiss the possibility of a comprehensive theory out of hand.

Certainly the different settings in which advising takes place call for different approaches and different strategies. However, a comprehensive theory of advising would not be about approaches and strategies; it would be about goals and purposes. And perhaps, at a high enough level of generality and abstraction, it is possible to identify a common purpose for the disparate advising practices we see around us.

Moreover, recall that the theory of advising we are seeking is a normative theory, not a descriptive one. Even if we should fail to discern significant commonality in the current behavior of advisers and students across the spectrum, it does not follow that we should reject an ideal for advising to which we could all strive in ways appropriate to our individual settings.

For these reasons I believe the possibility of a comprehensive theory of advising should not be dismissed. The evaluation of this possibility, ultimately, will lie in attempts to create such a theory, not in a priori arguments.

A common theory. The second possible interpretation of the phrase "unified theory" is that it would refer to a common theory. This meaning relates to a different dimension—not how universal the subject of the theory is, but how widely it is accepted. A common theory would be one that is accepted by most if not all people in the field.

There are benefits to a common theory. First, the process of sharing and debating ideas that would lead advisers to accept the theory would help individuals clarify their views and identify their own unrecognized assumptions. This process will further assure that the resulting product can stand up to scrutiny, it was properly vetted, and practitioners have foreseen and dealt with problems.

Second, a common theory—especially a common normative theory—gives the profession unity of purpose, a rallying cry, a sense of joint membership in a valuable enterprise. On a related note, a common theory makes it easier to identify, for stakeholders outside the field, why advising is essential. These

stakeholders range from students to provosts and presidents to state legislators, all of whom need to be convinced for different reasons that advising is important.

Nonetheless, concerns arise when someone advances the idea of a common theory. The first objection is that striving for a common theory is exactly the wrong way to go when we are enjoying a dramatic expansion of the range of ideas entering the advising field from the humanities as well as the social sciences. Why suppress this wave of creativity? But this argument overlooks the point that those new ideas are not theories of advising; they are about approaches and strategies, more of which are certainly always welcome, so their proliferation is not an obstacle to advisers' reaching consensus about the ultimate goals and purpose of our work. It seems to me entirely possible we could agree on the essential purposes of advising and at the same time be excited about the wide range of strategies and approaches we use to serve those purposes.

The second concern regarding a common theory is that if such a theory holds hegemony in the advising field, it can be stultifying. It can discourage the emergence of new ideas and create an atmosphere characterized by a sort of political correctness. This is particularly dangerous if the common theory is endorsed by and bears the imprimatur of an "official" organization. I think this concern is legitimate. We have seen the hegemony phenomenon in advising before, when the developmental advising paradigm held semi-official status in the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) for (in my opinion) much too long.

But it does not have to happen. In the history of the sciences it has been common for a theory to hold sway, explaining seemingly all the phenomena and effectively guiding inquiry, until a time comes when it fails to deal with too many anomalies, or another theory seems to do the job better. The transition periods are intellectually very exciting, but in their own way so are the lengthy periods of "normal science" when a dominant theory leads to valuable discoveries.

I would hope that we can trust advisers to creatively devise and objectively evaluate challenges to a prevailing theory. But if trust doesn't seem like the right concept, perhaps the more important point is that advisers should be expected, and educated, to participate in vigorous debates on theories of advising, just as scientists are educated to participate in such debates within their own fields.

On the other hand I do agree that resistance to an officially sanctioned theory of advising is appropriate. Ideas should stand on their own merits. Endorsement by an organization is unnecessary if the ideas are strong, and it is dangerous if they are not. One would not expect to see the American Philosophical Association endorsing philosophical theories, or the American Historical Association endorsing interpretations of history. Significantly, these are scholarly organizations; NACADA may be that—it certainly aspires to be—but it is also, and perhaps primarily, a practitioner organization. Even so, I believe it is more valuable for NACADA to provide a space for the debating of theoretical ideas than to endorse them.

My discomfort with an officially sanctioned common theory does not extend to opposing the prospect of a freely reached common theory. If a theory of advising should gain wider and wider acceptance, presumably on its merits, I think it would be foolish to oppose it just for that reason.

Summing up this section, I think we need to accept at least the possibility of a comprehensive theory and

the possibility of a common theory. I also wish to point out that these two dimensions are independent of each other: A theory might be comprehensive without being generally accepted and vice versa.

In this section, prior to discussing the theory that I support, I will identify some of the characteristics we should look for in a theory of advising, the goals or desiderata that it should meet. They are also criteria for judging the merits of a proposed theory of advising. There are two parts to this discussion: The first is a brief exploration of the epistemology of normative theories in general. This is important since these theories are not empirically testable so their merits clearly do not depend on matching up with observed facts. The second part is specific to evaluating a theory of advising.

The epistemology of normative theories

In *The Republic*, Plato (trans. 2007) set forth his conception of a "just" society. Many thinkers have criticized his vision, but nobody thinks it is wrong simply because it does not accurately describe the world as it is. Similarly when Crookston (2009) proposed the developmental view of advising, he knew perfectly well that he was not describing actual practice. But surely nobody thinks this invalidates his view (even if one disagrees with it for other reasons). He was proposing an ideal toward which people should strive. Both thinkers were proposing normative theories.

If normative theories are not tested for accuracy against the existing world, how are they evaluated? There are at least two ways.

To help us look at this, I will take a brief detour from the advising discussion and talk instead about theories of art. Why? Most of us are less invested in theories of art, since they are not about our own field, so we can look at them objectively and understand the general points first and then come back and apply those points to advising.

Artists, philosophers, and other thinkers have been trying for millennia to develop theories of art—theories that give the essential nature and purpose of art, what it should pursue, what distinguishes art from other activities. A theory of art will distinguish the essential characteristics—those that define art as art—from the incidental characteristics that often are present but aren't definitive. A theory of art will also serve to describe what constitutes great as opposed to lesser art. We don't need to examine the entire history of these theories to see a few points.

Suppose someone proposed the representational theory of art and declared "the purpose of art is to represent accurately the objects, people, or landscapes being pictured. So better art means more accurate art. Artistic skill, accordingly, lies in the ability to make accurate representations."

Is this a good theory? Here are some questions that we might raise to evaluate it.

- Does it do a good job of distinguishing art from that which is not art? In other words, is accurate representation really the key to art?
- Does it pick out the right paradigms of excellence? Are the paintings we value the most actually the most accurate ones?

- Is accurate representation an essential or an incidental characteristic of art? Are Rembrandt's portraits great art because of their accuracy or for some other reason?
- Does the theory *rule in* the right things? For example, if a photograph is an accurate representation of its subject, does that make it art?
- Does it rule out the right things? Will it down-rate impressionist paintings that are not conventionally accurate? What about cubist paintings? And especially, does it imply that abstract art is bad art, or not art at all— and if so, is that acceptable in a theory of art?

In the early twentieth century, at a time when abstract and non-representational painting was increasingly common, the British critic Clive Bell (1913/1958) argued that the representational theory was wrong, and proposed to replace it with the theory of what he called "significant form," which focused on the arrangement of elements such as line, color, and balance. He used two complementary types of argument. One was based on the fact that many people were finding pleasure in abstract paintings and were not troubled by impressionist paintings that weren't accurate in the traditional sense. The other method was to show, using numerous detailed examples, that his theory of significant form could explain the value of *both* the traditional representational paintings *and* the new abstractions.

My purpose is not to debate the representational theory, which has few adherents nowadays, or to defend Bell, but only to illustrate one of the ways *any* normative theory might be debated. Scholars look for examples of what it includes or excludes, what it holds up as paradigms, to see if these seem intuitively on target.

Bell's (1913/1958) work on significant form points toward the other main way to judge normative theories— how they lead to new ways of "looking at things" (literally in this case, but usually figuratively). Normative theories may encourage us to ask new questions, to see similarities where we had previously seen differences and vice versa. It is appropriate to ask of a normative theory, "Does the theory inspire? Does it inspire people to do new or different things, to explore new approaches, does it hold up an ideal that people want to pursue?" Theories of art for example should inspire both artists and audiences to see art in new and exciting ways, to discover things and do things they otherwise might not.

Interestingly there is a parallel quality we seek in scientific theories that is sometimes called their heuristic value. In addition to explaining and predicting phenomena, the best scientific theories also suggest new ways of thinking about familiar topics and new questions to investigate.

Thus the two main features of the epistemology of normative theories are that: 1) a normative theory should include and exclude the right examples, and pick out the right paradigms of excellence, and 2) it should lead to new and productive ways of looking at its subject matter and raise new questions to investigate.

Desiderata specifically for a theory of advising

In this section I will apply the general ideas discussed above to the quest for a theory of advising. What job do we want a theory of advising to do; what do we expect of it? Fundamentally, a theory of advising should:

- be tied to a philosophy of higher education (because we want it to show how advising is central to higher education).

- identify common elements in all the disparate activities, settings, populations that fall under the heading of advising. It should explain what is it that makes us place an advising label on all of those activities.
- distinguish essential from incidental characteristics of advising in the Aristotelian sense, and should distinguish advising from other activities. For example, how is advising different from counseling? We want advising to be advising, to have a distinctive purpose of its own. Our theory should embody the autonomy principle. A special case of this is that a theory about the transitions and challenges facing *all* 20-year-olds, even if they don't go to college, can't be a theory of advising, because it doesn't distinguish advising from the other forms of support and assistance such people need.
- identify what advisers do, both for those inside and for those outside the advising community, and show why advising is critical.
- imply a standard for what students and other stakeholders can expect from advisers. This applies to students, because we want advising to be an active relationship for them, and we have expectations of them. It applies to others, such as administrators, because we don't want them asking the wrong things of us, and we want them to evaluate our accomplishments based on our own criteria, not spurious criteria, e.g. we don't want to be evaluated on whether a student makes an unwise choice, and we don't want to be evaluated on degree completion.
- inspire advisers to reach for a vision of excellence.

As I stated at the outset, the principal ideas about advising that I want to promote are not brand new in this paper but are derived from those brought forward by, among others, Hemwall and Trachte (1999/2009; 2005) and Lowenstein (2005/2009; 2011) . I ask readers to reconsider those ideas in the context of the discussion above about the nature of a theory of advising and how we should judge a theory of advising.

The theory can be summarized in six main points. It is important to keep in mind that these are not descriptions of actual practice but reflect my view of what a theory of advising does and, as such, are statements of what advising ideally should be.

1. Advising is an academic endeavor. Its purposes are specific to institutions of higher education. The goals toward which students strive with their advisers are goals they have because they are students, as opposed to the goals they may share with contemporaries who are not students. This proposition distinguishes advising from counseling (including career counseling), a practice that is no less important than advising, but one that is not inherently specific to higher education.

2. Advising enhances learning and at its core is a locus of learning and not merely a signpost to learning. The purpose of a student's participation in advising is learning. That is to say, students do not see their advisers to find out where they may obtain the learning they want; they see us in order to learn. Helping students choose courses is an incidental quality of advising, whereas helping students learn is an essential quality of advising.

In identifying facilitation of learning as the essential purpose of advising rather than course selection, I do not mean to denigrate the latter. Course selection (at least when students have choices) is an important

process, and it is desirable for advisers to be involved in it. However, I think the main point is that course selection is a teachable moment—an opportunity for the student to focus not only on meeting requirements but also on understanding how each course fits into the big picture.

3. The learning that happens in advising is integrative, and helps students make meaning out of their education as a whole. In brief, what students accomplish in advising is to construct, intentionally and reflectively, an overall understanding of how the pieces of their education fit together, so that the whole emerges as more than the sum of its parts and their educational decisions are informed by a sense of how they fit into that whole. Each course a student takes and each way of knowing that he or she masters takes on greater importance and is better understood, as it is experienced or re-experienced in the context of other, contrasting or complementary experiences. The adviser facilitates this process. This is the most profound learning in the student's education, and the adviser who facilitates it is the student's prime educator. The learning is so central to a successful education that Lowenstein (2011) argued it is worthy of bearing credit toward graduation.

This point was implicit in Lowenstein's (2000) proposal that advising has the job of helping students understand and create the "logic of the curriculum," in Hemwall and Trachte's (1999/2009) suggestion that institutional mission statements are valuable texts for advising, and in the other works by these authors cited earlier.

4. The student must be an active rather than a passive participant in this process, a point for which Crookston (1972/1994/2009) deserves credit, though in some other respects his views are different from mine. The student has the task of constructing an education with the adviser serving as facilitator or "midwife," to use Socrates' metaphor (Plato, trans. 1957). The type of learning we are talking about here will not be effective if advisers try to transmit it unilaterally.

In this regard I believe the word "advise" can mislead both advisers and stakeholders, as it suggests one person provides "advice" and another receives it. The same may be true of the words "teach" and "learn" in the context of the classroom, as noted by Barr & Tagg (1995). In the future we may want to reconsider whether "advise" and its cognates provide the best label for what we do, but I doubt most people in the advising community are ready to contemplate that right now.

5. Advising is transformative, not transactional. Both Crookston (1972/1994/2009) and Lowenstein (2011) emphasize this. Students go to a service-providing office such as the registrar's office to have something done *for* them, as when we take our cars to a mechanic for service. When students work with their advisers, on the other hand, a *change* or *transformation* occurs. The distinction here is profound. If advising is perceived as a service, the implication is that advising is a transaction during which students get something to which they are entitled (perhaps because they have paid for it), as in any other transaction between a business and a customer. If instead we believe students are working with their advisers to make sense of their education and indeed their relationship to the world, we couldn't be further away from the transactional understanding of education.

6. Advising is central to achieving the learning goals of any college or university. Institutions, their missions, and their student bodies vary greatly, but they all identify things they want students to learn. Some curricula are highly structured and requirement-heavy, while others offer a lot of choice or represent a number of

possibilities in between. Regardless of how much leeway a student has in selecting the components, he or she needs to make sense of the logical connections among them, and understand the similarities and differences among them, too, in order to gain the maximum intended value from each. Few students will accomplish this task unaided. The one person who helps a student accomplish this complex goal effectively is the student's adviser.

I believe the ideas addressed above stand up well against the criteria suggested earlier for evaluating a theory of advising. First, the integrative learning theory is tied to a philosophy of higher education, a constructivist view in which learning is the central goal, the student is the active creator of his or her knowledge, and the educator's role is one of facilitation.

It is, moreover, a theory that can equally apply to advising in any type of institution, whether provided by faculty or by full-time advisers, and for any category of student. Whether an institution is focused on the liberal arts or on preparation for a particular profession, it must have learning as its central purpose, and it must want that learning to be intentional and integrated.

The theory distinguishes advising from such other activities as counseling. It identifies facilitating integrative learning as the essential purpose of advising. The theory ascribes a unique role to advising, thus observing the autonomy principle. The role it assigns to advisers with respect to students is specific to the educational setting; if those students weren't in college no one would need to play that role for them.

For purposes of communicating to stakeholders the importance of advising, the integrative learning theory offers a novel and effective solution. The role it envisions for advising is not one that is easily confused with others at the university, and (unlike course selection) it is not one that provosts and presidents are likely to think can be handed over to a computer or to paraprofessionals. Essentially this theory tells administrators advising is one of the most important tools they have at their disposal in fulfilling their teaching and learning mission. It provides an argument for making sure the institution has adequate staffing for advising— whether it is accomplished by faculty or by full-time staff—and when provided by staff, the theory supports affording those staff a stature comparable to that of faculty.

The theory communicates to students that they should expect their advising relationship to be an intellectually challenging one that will require substantial effort on their parts but will offer extraordinary rewards as well.

Finally, I believe this theory offers advisers a vision that promotes their work as being far more vital and challenging and less routine than it is sometimes thought to be. It says advisers are—or can be— supremely important to their students, to their institution, and to the higher education enterprise. It suggests the possibility of a higher status in that enterprise than advisers are accustomed to, though achieving that goal is far from assured and not solely within advisers' own power to realize.

As discussed earlier, any theory of advising will not only identify the fundamental purposes of advising but

also have some further implications. A few implications of the integrative learning theory are below.

Who will be great advisers? Like members of any educational profession who work with students, they will of course need to have some personal characteristics conducive to forming strong, trusting relationships. That doesn't differentiate them from anyone else at the university, however; so, what else? They will be individuals who are intellectually agile enough to engage with students in real time to discuss how their learning in one course relates to that in another. They should have educational backgrounds broad enough to help students understand the complementarity of the various ways of knowing in the disciplines they study. I believe what they have studied—i.e., their particular program or discipline—is less important than their experience with intentional focus on the interrelationships of disciplines. Before undertaking the work of advising (and repeatedly thereafter), they will have attempted their own personal, reflective analysis of their education. How did its components fit together to make sense? What aspects did they perhaps fail to take full advantage of? In what ways are they still digesting and reevaluating their learning on an ongoing basis?

How will we assess advising? If the goal of advising is for students to integrate their learning to make a coherent whole of their education, how will we determine how well they have done that? A mode of documentation benefiting students, advisers, institutions, and even external stakeholders would be a portfolio, maintained by the students for their entire career at the institution and containing work selected to demonstrate the meeting of learning goals supported by reflective essays displaying the integrative thinking they have done.

Finally, the integrative learning theory suggests that, administratively, advising would best be housed in the academic affairs division of an institution. Its affinities with the work of faculty, I think, are stronger than its affinities with the work of counselors and other student affairs professionals. I argued above that advisers (including those who are not faculty) should be afforded stature similar to that of faculty. This is not only about salaries. Advisers should be expected to be scholar-practitioners, who are both expected and supported to remain involved in consuming and creating scholarship in their field. Moreover, in view of the kinds of knowledge and expertise integrative advisers will have, their voices should be heard along with those of faculty on matters of curriculum and academic policy. These considerations, I believe, place them on the academic side of the institution.

I have referred multiple times to the work of Crookston (1972/1994/2009) in a way that implies he advocated a theory of advising. I think it is not uncommon to ascribe a theory to Crookston and to others who agree with his views, which would be called the developmental theory of advising. In one of the first systematic attempts to survey theory in our field, Hagen (2005, p. 4) identified such a theory when he wrote, "Without that start-up theory, advising would not be where it is as a field today. Known as developmental theory, this viewpoint regards the physical, emotional, and intellectual development of a student as paramount considerations with regard to practice."

Yet Grites, certainly one of the foremost proponents of developmental advising, has claimed that developmental advising is not a theory. Is there a dispute here? If so, who is right?

If we are careful we do not have to construe this as a dispute. Grites (2013a, p. 12; 2013b, p. 52) said:

> *Developmental academic advising is not a theory*. It is based on developmental theories and perspectives, but the practice is an advising strategy, a method, a technique, an approach, a way of doing advising.

The theories and perspectives to which he refers are among those I would characterize as instrumental theories, so Grites is thinking about those in a manner consistent with mine. In identifying developmental advising as a strategy, method, etc., he is certainly correct. He explains that in detail in his two essays cited above.

The key to sorting out this problem lies in ideas suggested by Schulenberg (2013). She pointed out that the phrase "developmental advising" may refer to three different types of concept:

- Developmental Advising: Advising influenced by the student personnel point of view, which posits that advising is an activity that's meant to promote holistic student development.
- Developmental Theory: May refer to a variety of psycho-social theories that explain and predict how humans develop their personalities, identities, and habits of decision making, meaning making, etc.
- Developmental Approaches: Techniques that advisers might use to promote a particular kind of psycho-social development.

The third of these possibilities represents what Grites referred to when he said "… the practice is an advising strategy, a method, a technique, an approach, a way of doing advising" (2013a, p. 12; 2013b, p. 52). The second item represents the "developmental theories and perspectives" Grites (2013a, p. 12; 2013b, p. 52) cited, which I have classified as instrumental theories. It is the first of Schulenberg's three options that may bear some resemblance to a normative theory of advising since, in her words, it identifies what advising is "meant to promote." (2013). Identifying what advising is meant to promote is essentially what I have characterized as the role of a theory of advising.

Proponents of developmental advising who do *not* wish to advocate a theory of advising will be on the most secure ground if, like Grites, they focus on presenting developmental advising as a method or approach, while noting that developmental theories (cognitive, personal, or otherwise) are not theories of advising. They will, on the other hand, be offering a theory of advising *if* they make claims about the essential purpose of advising. Their theory of advising will disagree with the theory of integrative learning *if* they identify that purpose as other than in the integration and enhancement of students' academic learning.

It is beyond the purpose of this paper to determine whether any of the major historical proponents of developmental advising meant to offer such a theory. Proponents can speak for themselves, if they wish. I think it would be particularly unhelpful to examine selected essays on developmental advising and seek passages that may or may not be open to such an interpretation. Such essays were not written with my discussion above in mind or in light of my definition of "theory of advising." Therefore, I think it would be anachronistic to interpret past writings from the perspectives I offer here. I do think, however, it would be a useful contribution to the theory and philosophy of advising if someone finds merit in my analysis of the nature of theory and addresses developmental advising from that perspective.

Regardless of how widely accepted the integrative learning theory may prove to be or how long before another theory displaces it, I believe I have provided a useful account of what a theory of advising is and how it differs from other theories discussed in the advising literature. Specifically, I think the following points have merit independent of the fate of the integrative learning theory:

- A theory of advising must meet the autonomy principle and articulate advising as a distinct area of practice and thought, distinguishing it from other activities at colleges and universities.
- A theory of advising must identify the essential nature and purpose of advising, distinguishing these from characteristics of advising that are incidental.
- In these respects a theory of advising is different from the many theories in other disciplines to which advisers sometimes refer; not recognizing this difference is a source of confusion.
- A theory of advising is normative—it does not describe, explain, or predict the behavior of advisers or students but articulates a vision of what advising could and should be. This feature of the theory makes it useful to advisers as an ideal toward which they can strive and to stakeholders as a reference point for valuing advising.
- Prospective theories of advising should be evaluated and compared in light of these propositions.

The integrative learning theory offers a plausible and comprehensive statement of the essential nature of advising that sets academic advising apart as a distinctive area of practice and thought. I have emphasized that a comprehensive theory of advising such as mine is consistent with a wide range of approaches and strategies. I have offered some criteria against which advisers can judge proposed theories of advising and have shown that my theory measures up reasonable well against these criteria. I have not attempted, however, to compare my theory to any competing theories that may exist. In any field of thought, such competition is inevitable, and I welcome it.

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