ABSTRACT
        The perennial problem of college students indecision
regarding their future career is well documented in the professional
counseling literature. This paper seeks to outline practical and effective
strategies for counseling undecided college students. Another goal of this
article is to highlight relevant career counseling strategies for working
with culturally different, undecided college students. Krumboltzs "Learning
Theory of Career Counseling" is used as a framework for describing these
strategies. (GCP)

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by

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Introduction

The perennial problem of college students' indecision regarding their future career is well documented in the professional counseling literature. Gordon (1998) in a thorough literature review of this topical issue was able to identify four categories of undecided students: tentatively undecided; developmentally undecided; seriously undecided and chronically undecided. Tentatively undecided students are close to making a career decision as some have already identified career options but may need additional information or time before committing to a specific option. The developmentally undecided group is described as those in need of a better understanding of themselves and also desiring heightened awareness of their career possibilities. Seriously undecided students may experience moderate to debilitating levels of anxiety about making a career choice. The anxiety may be attributable to perfectionistic tendencies or the belief that some expert or authority must make the decision for them. Chronically undecided students exhibit excessive and severe anxiety about making a career choice. Consequently, they may choose to postpone making a decision or avoid thinking about making up their minds regarding their future careers.

In view of the above discussion about undecided college students, it is important to outline effective intervention strategies for working with this group of students. It may also be noted that Vogt's (1998) study was one of the efforts designed to help undecided college students. The results of this study revealed that majority of the undecided students were able to identify a career of interest to them. There is, however, a necessity to build on the work done by Vogt (1998). Hence, the main purpose of this paper is to outline practical effective strategies for counseling undecided college students. Another goal of this article is to highlight relevant career counseling strategies for working with culturally different, undecided college students. Krumboltz's (1992) Learning Theory of Career Counseling is used as a framework for describing these strategies.

Krumboltz Learning Theory of Career Counseling

Briefly, this theory stipulates that the process of career development involves four factors: genetic endowments and special abilities; environmental conditions and events; learning experiences and task approach skills. The thrust of this discussion relative to counseling undecided college students will be on the last three factors.

Krumboltz (1992) noted that (based on learning experiences) people form generalizations or beliefs in an attempt to represent their own reality. Two types of generalizations were identified. The first was the self-observation generalizations, which are generalizations about oneself especially with respect to one's attitudes, skills and self

concept. An example of this may be a first generation Mexican American immigrant, first year college student, who abdicated a desire to continue a college education because of language problems. This trend of thought may lead to a serious consideration of dropping out of college. This irrational conclusion may have been due to a disappointing grade on a test in one course. The second type of generalizations identified by Krumboltz is the worldview generalizations. These are generalizations about environment, especially with respect to the nature of various occupations. An example will be a college student with physical disability (in a wheelchair) who decided not to explore a budding interest in medicine because of lack of awareness of any practicing medical doctors in a wheelchair. Krumboltz argued that if such generalizations go unchallenged, that there is a risk that viable career options may go unexplored. It is, therefore, very important for counselors to challenge such a group of students to examine how their learning experiences and related assumptions may have impacted their thinking about careers. Krumboltz's (1994) Career Belief Inventory is a good tool for facilitating this process.

Regarding environmental factors, it is important for counselors to become aware of occupational fields that are in decline and those that are on the rise. Undoubtedly, this kind of information will be helpful for undecided students in making their career choice. Useful information sources for identifying these fields include the Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dictionary of Occupational Titles, and O*NET.

Task approach skills according to Krumboltz (1992) deal with sets of skills that a person has developed e.g., problem-solving skills and work habits. In order to enhance these skills relative to career development of undecided students, it is important that counselors help the students develop a good understanding of themselves and the world of work. The following are useful strategies for attaining this goal:

- The use of pertinent assessment tools that measure interests, skills, values, personality etc. Counselors will find this resource - *A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instruments* by Kapes and Whitefield (2001) useful for identifying assessment tools that they may need for assessing the various traits.
- The use of computerized career guidance systems e.g., SIGI, DISCOVER for both self-assessment and exploration of occupational fields.
- Connect students with positive role models working in various and different occupational and professional fields.
- Encourage students to do informational interviews and shadow persons in the fields that may appeal to them. These experiences may help decrease some of their fears, anxiety and also challenge their irrational beliefs about the fields, and perhaps their own self-efficacy issues.

Implications for Career Counseling of Undecided Culturally Diverse Students

The term "culturally diverse" is defined broadly to include marginalized members of the society such as persons of color; members of the gay community and persons with disability. The use of relevant role models (by encouraging the students to read relevant autobiographies or utilizing bibliotherapy) in challenging students' negative learning experiences is useful. It is also suggested that counselors develop a list of local professionals

of color in various desirable career fields as a resource that could be made available to undecided students for informational or shadowing purposes (Okocha, 1995).

Additionally, it is essential that counselors ensure that the assessment tools being used for students of color meet the appropriate psychometric standards e.g., validity, reliability and normative requirements. Also, counselors are encouraged to incorporate informal assessment strategies (Okocha, 1999) in their intervention plans. Specifically, utilizing The Multicultural Career Counseling Checklist (Ward & Bingham, 1993) will be helpful in alerting the counselor to possible cross-cultural issues relative to value and worldview differences. Finally, the counselor's role as an advocate for this group of students cannot be overemphasized. For instance, counselor's advocacy for the students relative to meaningful placement for externship and internship experiences is critical for facilitating effective career decision.

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