

THEORY MATTERS

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Advisors who understand developmental and advising theory will become better practitioners. Whether faculty members, professionals, or peers, advisors who understand and apply theory in their practice challenge themselves to understand their advisees' psychosocial, cognitive, and identity development.

Furthermore, theories help advisors achieve positive and satisfying interactions as they work with their advisees. Historically, developmental theories—such as those articulated by Burns Crookston (1972/1994/2009), Terry O'Banion (1972/1994/2009), William Perry (1968), Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser (1993), and Vincent Tinto (1993), among others—have provided the foundation for applied theories in academic advising because they describe, explain, and help predict student behaviors; offer a framework for interactions with students; and generate a solid basis for advisors' questions, advice, and actions. Developmental theory makes a connection between the dictate of classes to take and the guidance of a student toward decisions that help define and clarify immediate and lifelong values, goals, and objectives. Advisors who bring theory into practice lay the foundation for strong and productive advisor–advisee relationships.

Theories change, grow, and evolve. No single paradigm characterizes academic advising; in fact, myriad theories frame it, and understanding and applying them in practice elevate the profession of academic advising. Furthermore, attempts to simplify theories may obscure the ability to see their applicability and utility. Therefore, the primer offered in this chapter presents relatively few of the foundational and current theories most common to sound advising. As they gain experience and curiosity, advisors will discover dozens more. Moreover, they will recognize that many overlap, build on others, and exhibit similarities within categories of theories. The ambiguities and fuzzy boundaries between and among theories and models of advising, advising approaches, methods, and styles may initially confound an advisor but prove to inspire further exploration as the new advisor grows.

Although it offers no guarantee of the outcomes of an advisor–advisee interaction, theory provides

- a framework for advisors to guide their practices and to construct appropriate responses to advisees;
- a process that helps advisors systematically develop their own professional skills;

- a means of assessing students' levels of development and cognitive stages, enabling advisors to guide them in their personal and intellectual growth; and
- a context for a broader understanding of advisees as developing adults, adult learners, and as applicable, members of underrepresented populations.

Foundational Developmental Theorists and Theories

One of the often cited theories of advising, *developmental advising*, refers to a “systematic process based on a close student–advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources” (Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites, 1984, p. 19). Developmental advising evolved from cognitive structural theories used to examine the way people think, theories used to look at the psychological and social development of individuals, and those that focus on specific populations (King, 2005). Alexander Astin (1985), Marcia Baxter Magolda (2010), Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser (1993), Burns Crookston (1972/1994/2009), Terry O’Banion (1972/1994/2009), William Perry (1968), Nancy Schlossberg (1984, 1989), and Vincent Tinto (1993) are classical and contemporary theorists with whom advisors should be acquainted, but new advisors would benefit from further examination of additional developmental, cognitive, and identity theories. The more one knows about a theory, the more relevant it becomes.

Burns Crookston and Terry O’Banion

In the early 1970s, Burns Crookston created a broad definition of advising that gave birth to the application of developmental theory to practice: “Advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, and problem solving, decision making, and evaluation skills” (Crookston, 1972, p. 12). According to Crookston, developmental academic advising involves progression toward goals and evolves from constructive discourse between the advisor and the advisee in the context of the campus, social, and academic environments. By applying developmental theories, advisors recognize their advisees’ states of psychosocial development and can best guide them toward growth in intellectual, psychological, and social areas.

Crookston (1972/1994/2009) believed that, in addition to guiding students toward degree completion, advisors need to help advisees examine personal values and implement plans to lead satisfying, gratifying, and productive lives. Furthermore, this developmental advising visionary made the point that if it contributed to student growth, then advising could not be divorced from teaching. Along with O’Banion (1972/1994/2009), Crookston is largely credited with suggesting that the advisor and the advisee share responsibility for advising, a stark contrast to previous practices that had placed the advisor in an authoritative role.

Terry O'Banion (1972/1994/2009) also framed the concept of shared responsibility between the advisor and the advisee. His model, as originally described, applies developmental theory to advising in a top-down linear regression: exploration of

- life goals,
- vocational goals,
- program choice,
- course choice, and
- class schedule.

In this process, the advisor and advisee address the large questions about life goals and values such that the advisee can later freely concentrate on vocational goals. Over time, the conversational scope of the advisor and the advisee narrows as they focus increasingly toward the major, the courses, and finally, the scheduling of classes. As advisors gain experience, they recognize that the advisee does not always proceed linearly through the O'Banion (1972/1994/2009) model and that developmental advising takes time and a trusting relationship. In addition, the distinctions between progressions may be unclear; for example, a student may be self-assured about a major, but may not have asked the in-depth questions about the reasons the major is appealing, the extent it fits with the advisee's life goals, or the student's ability to logistically manage the program to degree completion.

A student named Armani loves dramas—TV shows, books, and movies about physical anthropology and archeology—and thus declares the intent to work as a forensic anthropologist. However, Armani takes little interest in anatomy, chemistry, formal logic, data analysis, or theory—disciplines necessary for sound academic and scientific inquiry in the field. Applying O'Banion's (1972/1994/2009) model, the advisor, Morgan, explores life goals with Armani: "What do you know about the profession?" "Why is the field important?" "Why is it important to you?" "What are the professional opportunities?" As they work through the subsequent levels of inquiry, Armani demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the academic preparation necessary to become a forensic anthropologist. These advising dialogues eventually reveal to Armani a passion for, knowledge about, and commitment to art history. This insight has culminated in Armani's vision to work in a museum or gallery and has, in turn, informed the subsequent discussions with Morgan about selection of an appropriate major and courses.

A commonly accepted symbol for O'Banion's (1972/1994/2009) model is the funnel, with life goals at the top and the scheduling of courses at the narrow end. O'Banion's model created the basis for further evolution of advising theory.

William Perry

In the late 1960s, William Perry (1968) developed a psychosocial theory on college student intellectual and moral development. Simply stated, by having their truths

and beliefs challenged, advisees grow and adapt. Perry noted that students typically progress from a simple, dualistic view of their worlds to an awareness of ambiguity. Eventually they acknowledge the relativity in peoples' values and affirm one's own commitments and values.

According to Perry (1968), in the early stages of personal development, dual realities exist in a paradigm of either-or situations: They are right or wrong, black or white, good or bad. Such clear boundaries result in relatively easy, prescriptive decision making. As young adults mature, their dualism evolves into subjective multiplicity and they begin to recognize the grey areas that shade some circumstances, the validity of others' points of view, and acceptable ranges of ambiguity. Finally, in the relativism stage, individuals construct their own truths, based on their values, experiences, and knowledge; they appreciate the complexity of questions and answers at multiple levels as well as their own ethnocentricities and those of others.

Leslie was facilitating a group advising session for new transfer students and referenced the spectrum of attendance policies put forth by faculty members, departments, and collegiate units. One advisee in attendance took a dualistic position and asked, "Well, do I have to attend every day or don't I?" Another advisee, who saw the multiplicity in the statement, thought "I suppose I'll need to check each syllabus." A third advisee, who had reached a position of relativism, showed no surprise that absenteeism was not regarded with absolutes and appreciated faculty members' exercise of academic freedom in determining attendance policies. A fourth attendee recognized that an absence could be excused under certain circumstances, and in other instances, the cost of missing a class unexcused might be worth the opportunity gained, for example, to attend an interview for a prestigious internship.

Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto

In the 1980s, Alexander Astin's (1985) practical theory of involvement illustrated ways to maximize the intellectual and social development of students. He hypothesized that students perform better academically when they are involved in cocurricular campus activities. Astin posited that engaged students, on one hand, show more commitment to academic programs, develop more campus relationships, participate in student or campus organizations and committees, and seem comfortable interacting with faculty members and administrators. On the other hand, uninvolved students tend to demonstrate relatively poor academic performances and seem less likely to form supportive student and campus relationships, which include members of the faculty and the administration (Astin, 1985).

Astin built his theory of involvement on three core elements. The *inputs* include students' demographics, socioeconomic backgrounds, and experiences. They frame the environmental element and the way in which students view their academic situations. *Outcomes* reflect the maturity, knowledge, attitudes, and values of students and ways they choose to live after they graduate.

A first-generation freshman (inputs), Shea set up a meeting with Casey, a faculty advisor. Shea divulged the lackluster nature of this semester's academic performance, reported having made few friends, and appeared to feel isolated (environment). Casey noted that the Student Center needs board members and suggested that Shea apply for a position. Shea reluctantly took Casey's suggestion and was appointed to a seat on the board. Soon after joining the board, Shea started making friends, going to meetings, developing leadership skills, and connecting with others on campus. Shea, whose grades subsequently improved, led a productive life on campus and became a champion of involvement and engagement for first-generation students (outcomes).

Astin's (1985) theory applies in many ways to the advisor-advisee relationship. His work has provided one of the strongest arguments for cocurricular student involvement and the positive correlation it shows with student persistence.

In 1993, Vincent Tinto addressed student departure in community colleges, but now scholars recognize his theory as universally applicable to persistence and degree completion among students in a variety of higher education institutions. Tinto identified three key causes of student departure, in no particular order: academic difficulties; the dissonance students experience when they are unable to identify, articulate, and pursue their educational goals; and a failure or inability to become involved in the fabric of campus intellectual and social environments. To persist, Tinto argued, students should integrate into formal and informal campus and social activities. Tinto, similar to Astin (1985), hypothesized that negative experiences, such as social isolation and poor academic performance, lead to marginalization and withdrawal; positive experiences, such as involvement in campus activities and utilization of academic support programs, when necessary, contribute to the growth of engaged, successful college students.

Tinto's (1993) theory clearly plays out in the experiences of some military veterans returning from active duty. Feeling isolated and uncomfortable in a campus world made up largely of 18- and 19-year-olds, Loren, a nontraditional-aged veteran recently returned from overseas, began to withdraw and disconnect from the 4-year university, feeling it was not a good fit. Kelly, the academic advisor for most military veterans and service personnel, encouraged Loren to join the Veterans Club. Upon attendance, Loren experienced formal and informal involvement, in and out of class, as advocated by Tinto (1993) and Astin (1985) at multiple levels: meeting staff members similar in age and others with comparable life experiences both in and out of the military. Loren increasingly felt more connected and subsequently engaged more confidently with nonveteran and younger students. To encourage a student such as Loren, advisors must recognize signs of marginalization, be sensitive to the interactions that help students persist, and acknowledge advisees' unique experiences and talents.

Arthur Chickering and Linda Reisser

In 1993, Arthur Chickering, along with Linda Reisser, revised his 1969 theory of identity development in college students. Advisors frequently apply Chickering's work to

discussions of growth in college students. The revised theory features seven dimensions, or vectors, of student development:

- developing intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence;
- managing emotions;
- developing emotional autonomy and recognizing interdependence;
- developing healthy interpersonal relationships;
- establishing identity;
- developing purpose; and
- developing integrity.

At first glance, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) ideas of development appear much more complicated than Astin's (1985) or Tinto's (1993) theories. However, as advisors become acquainted with the vectors, they visualize each on a continuum along which a student's development progresses. Most advisees, as young adults, undergo the process of developing their intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competencies; learning to manage their emotions, thus gaining emotional maturity; and entering healthy relationships—all prerequisites for successfully establishing identity, purpose, and integrity. The academic advisor fosters forward movement on the continuum.

Shelby, a freshman with a cocksure attitude, questioned the reason for consulting with an advisor before registration: "This is a waste of time—I already know what classes I have to take" came through loudly and clearly through body language in the advising appointment with Dana. Moreover, Shelby did, indeed, know exactly which classes to take next semester.

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory, built on Chickering's previous research, explains the reason an effective, engaged advisor does more than help students pick classes. Dana recognized that Shelby was struggling at multiple levels; specifically, the over-the-top attitude suggested that Shelby may be dealing with issues other than academics. By asking a leading question, Dana scoped Shelby's position in regard to the first vector, developing competencies: "How was your last exam?" Shelby answered with obvious irritation, "The study questions didn't have anything to do with the test questions, so I blew the test." This unsurprising response—the inability to connect study questions to the exam—indicated that Shelby needs to work on intellectual competence. Reinforcing the first vector, developing intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence, Dana asked questions that pointed toward Shelby's responsibility for the exam results: "Why do you think the study questions did not set you up for a successful exam?" "Did other students in the class have the same problem?" Shelby's subsequent communication with Dana and with classmates propelled Shelby's intellectual and interpersonal growth, and eventually Shelby could see and apply the relationships between study points and broader examination questions.

During these conversations about the test, Dana noticed Shelby's limited advancement in the third vector: developing emotional autonomy and recognizing interdependence in relationships. Shelby's response to Dana's simple question of "Have you talked with your professor?" confirmed these suspicions. Dana encouraged Shelby to disengage from peer influence and accept responsibility for performance, initially by establishing a relationship with the professor so that Shelby controlled future events instead of allowing them to dictate the circumstances that contribute to a poor attitude and performance.

In a developmentally oriented response to Shelby's projections, Dana opened their first session with conciliatory dialogue: "Okay, let's not talk about the classes since you appear to be set in that area. Let's talk about other aspects of your experiences here." Dana followed up with inquiries such as "Where, at this institution, do you find answers when you need them?" "Do you know any faculty members personally?" or "Are you involved in any activities?" The answers to the questions told Dana, who considered the responses in light of Vectors 3 and 4, whether Shelby was making any connections or meaningful relationships on campus.

Dana also recognized that Shelby needed coaching in the second vector. Shelby's haughty demeanor suggested an inability to manage emotions. Dana gave Shelby permission to discuss weaknesses and fears by asking, "Is there anything I can say that will make you smile?" Some students may respond to a carefully couched statement such as "I suspect under that attitude there is a really nice young person. Am I right?" Beginning in the advisor–advisee relationship, Dana steered Shelby toward better management of emotions and attitude.

Development in the first four vectors is a prerequisite for development in the fifth vector: establishing identity. As Dana asked about Shelby's values, peer groups, talents, interests, and friends, over time, Shelby's identity progressed from that of an emotionally needy high schooler to an independent, committed, college student. Gaining real confidence, Shelby laid the groundwork for development in the fifth, sixth, and seventh vectors. After a few semesters, Shelby had developed a solid sense of identity and appreciation for intellectual and cultural diversity. As a result, Shelby's relationships became more stable and a personal moral code by which to live emerged. Shelby consulted with Dana and professors on a regular basis and engaged in student government. By graduation, Shelby was much further along the continuum than upon arrival at Dana's office several semesters earlier.

Dana's thoughtful questions—such as "How committed are you to the courses you are taking?" or "How will these courses help you after college?" and "How do you want to live your life?"—encouraged Shelby to think about important life goals and values. The questions motivated Shelby's development of the sixth and seventh vectors: purpose and integrity.

By engaging in a holistic conversation, Dana let Shelby know that success in college includes more than completing degree requirements. Understanding and helping a student move through the vectors helped produce a responsibly engaged citizen, one

whose relationships and identities extend beyond self to impact the workforce and the community.

In another example of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory in action, Corey, a sophomore, admitted, "Nothing is going right." A formerly home-schooled student, Corey now floundered academically, had not found a niche, and did not know where to go for help. Corey told Blair, the advisor for undecided students, about discomfort with a particular study group Blair had recommended. In addition, Cory had gained weight and lost confidence, disengaging from educational opportunities and verbalizing intentions for departure.

Corey's intellectual and interpersonal competencies, learned through home schooling, had apparently arrested. Specifically, Corey needed to acknowledge an inability to independently take on every college challenge. With the first, third, and fourth vectors in mind, Blair helped Corey recognize the reality and importance of interdependency. Corey needed to rely on a tutor, a study group, or consultations with professors. By connecting with any or all of the people available as resources in the college environment, Corey developed mature interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Blair encouraged Corey to get involved in an activity or club to nurture leadership skills, which subsequently contribute to the competence and confidence Corey needed to continue progressing in the fourth vector: identity development.

As an advisor becomes familiar with Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors, he or she can usually see a student's development on the continuum. Then the advisor must find the appropriate levels of challenges and supports for the advisee. With time and experience, the advisor often finds Chickering and Reisser's vectors helpful in fostering an advisee's personal growth.

Nancy Schlossberg

In 1989, Nancy Schlossberg outlined a position that advisors should embrace: the theory of mattering and marginality. Schlossberg's work supports that of other theorists who believe that disengagement leads to student departure from the institution. By applying Schlossberg's theory to practice, the advisor recognizes the discomfort of some students within the academy; that is, students easily become marginalized if they fail to connect with an individual or a group. When students know they matter, confidence replaces feelings of marginality. As simple and straightforward as this theory appears, Schlossberg bolstered its credence through her research showing the importance of mattering. She found that for a successful academic experience, students must believe someone or some group finds them important. When they believe they do not matter, students disengage and withdraw. Therefore, for advisors, advisees matter.

Advisors can easily apply Schlossberg's theory by practicing good relational skills. They should focus on advisees, welcome and listen to them, demonstrate patience, show comfort with silence, and remain relaxed. As the relationships evolve, advisors let advisees know that ideas, questions, and initiatives matter, and most important,

advisors can easily apply Schlossberg's theory by genuinely feeling that each advisee matters.

Before explaining the values of mattering and marginality, Schlossberg (1984) had created a transition theory that applies to college students who experience major life changes—departure from home or returning to college as adults, making new friends, becoming independent or changing family roles, and questioning their place in an emerging new personal world. Schlossberg (1984) framed transitions in adults' lives as a change in circumstances or relationships in response to an event that pushes one out of comfort zones. Therefore, in addition to applications to traditional-aged students who matriculate from high school or other colleges, transition theory can help advisors understand international student experiences and the new social and academic environments that influence all their advisees' innermost and outer selves. It can also inform advisors about the challenges of nontraditional students reentering the academic world.

Marcia Baxter Magolda

Nowadays, Marcia Baxter Magolda's (2010) idea of self-authorship is a common theme in advisors' discussions about theory. Baxter Magolda divided self-authorship into three domains: epistemological (how one knows), intrapersonal (listening to inner voices), and interpersonal (listening to the voices of others). Self-authorship easily complements Perry's (1968) theory on intellectual and social development because it reflects psychosocial development. In the advising process, by discovering their own truths, responsibilities, and values, advisees develop the ability to think critically at multiple levels, understand and examine the complexities and construction of their decisions and knowledge, and appreciate the complexities, their experiences, and themselves. Advisees who have reached a degree of self-authorship no longer rely on others to define their knowledge and values.

Adia, a student from an immigrant family, entered the university as a freshman undeclared major over a year after her high school graduation and after a year of working in the family business. Adia had one foot in her family's traditional collectivist culture, in which the family or parents make decisions, and one foot in the 21st century individualistic western world, in which individuals are seen as responsible for their own decisions.

Adia's parents agreed that an accounting degree would be beneficial to the family business. However, Adia had positive role models in mathematics and science courses in a large urban high school and was motivated to be a computer scientist. Because of her respect for parental authority, Adia experienced dissonance in trying to balance traditional cultural values, the family business her parents expected her to join after graduation, and her newly discovered personal academic and professional goals.

Adia's advisor, Tristen, applied the epistemological domain of Baxter Magolda's (2010) theory of self-authorship by suggesting that Adia spend 30 minutes each

day for a week collecting images and articles about women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Tristen also asked Adia to interview three female faculty members in STEM disciplines, including computer science. Because Adia was uncomfortable having conversations with authority figures, Tristen explained the best way to contact professors and presented ways to begin and continue conversations with them. For example, Tristen suggested appropriate interview questions that would elicit responses Adia could use to obtain a realistic picture of the problems and promises of a career in computer science. With her interview questions in hand, Adia felt more confident in interviewing the professors.

Adia returned the collection of images, articles, and interview results to Tristen. The following semester, Adia, having acquired a more complete understanding of the challenges of a computer science student and professional, and at the behest of Tristen, visited Career Services to research opportunities in computer science, graduate school aspirations, and other advice on how best to prepare for this career choice. The information gleaned from visits to Career Services built on the foundation of first semester research and interviews. The process elevated Adia's knowledge and ways of thinking to a more complex level: the intrapersonal domain.

By the end of her freshman year, equipped with knowledge about the promise, obstacles, and options of the major and career choice, Adia declared a computer science major, fully aware of the challenges ahead. With increased confidence, she returned to her parents and fully explained the research she had conducted and the plan she had outlined to pursue her new career goals as a computer scientist.

Student Identity

Many identity theories—such as those related to gender, sex, race, ethnicity, and disability, to name only a few—apply to young adults in general and advisees in particular. A long and complex process, identity development typically commences during adolescence and young adulthood. Circumstances and events, coupled with normal psychosocial development, manifest in physical, psychosocial, emotional, and intellectual based self-inquiries such as “Who am I?” and “How and where do I fit in this world?” Advisors must be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the theories and stages of identity development to understand the advisees' experiences, provide a safe environment for those struggling with their identities, and guide them to a more secure stage in their development.

Advisors understand that advisees, especially those of traditional age and new matriculants to higher education, are figuring out who they are, and most identity theories suggest movement, not always smooth, along a continuum. However, they may not fully appreciate the unique aspects of identity development for those not in majority populations, such as those who identify as transgender, gay, bisexual, or lesbian, and those with disabilities or in underrepresented cohorts of race or ethnicity. International advisees also experience atypical transition issues and question their fit into the U.S. culture. In addition to looking for meaning in their new

home, these students may also be experiencing challenges with language and cultural barriers.

When advisors first meet an international advisee they should recognize the years of dedication and preparation undertaken for his or her American academic experience. They also must remember that, despite their interest in a U.S. education, international students have established their identity through the traditional cultural values of their home countries. Furthermore, they may have recently dealt with family pressure in selecting the appropriate college to attend and major to pursue to secure a high-profile, high-income profession. They may have intensely competed with others to gain the opportunity to study in the United States. International students typically experience a variety of concerns as they settle into their new academic environments. They might worry about food differences, living arrangements, weather, money, health, academic performance, and sociocultural and psychosocial issues such as culture shock and homesickness (Kim, 2012).

Helena left her home country, where community is valued over the individual, and family relationships are emphasized over achievement, especially for females. She landed in a culture with vastly different values than those with which she was raised. Fortunately for Helena, the U.S. university she attends offers a strong international student program that welcomed her and walked her through the initial registration process.

Despite little proficiency in conversational English, Helena understood all that her advisor, Lee, said to her, and Lee knew that Helena's relatively poor spoken English skills did not reflect her academic ability. Helena slowly demonstrated increased independence, and began, with Lee's encouragement, to make self-directed decisions about her academic program and social life, some of which would have been questioned by those living in her home country.

Lee suggested that Helena move outside her comfort zone, but Helena continued to surround herself with friends from her homeland. Helena declared a business major, and Lee encouraged her to meet students with other majors, but Helena resisted. Lee then recommended that Helena take a particular business ethics course, which required group work, in the hope that it might challenge her traditional worldviews. Helena took the course, which proved a turning point in her identity. She saw herself no longer as a traditional young woman practicing her country's values, but rather as an international student witnessing plural points of view in a multicultural setting. Other international advisees, however, had difficulties resolving the conflicts between their former, traditional ways of life and the new, different environment with unfamiliar rules and social mores, and they needed more time and advisor support than Helena to recognize and resolve their identity crises.

Eventually, Helena limited herself neither to her group of culturally similar peers nor to the values of her native region; she did not divorce herself from either. Helena recognized her independence and interdependence, appreciated multicultural values, and distinguished herself as an engaged international student. Helena benefited from the advice of a persistent advocate who understood the many challenges international

students confront in identifying who they are and where they fit in their new global environment.

Ying came to the United States as an international student determined to succeed. He was an only child, and his parents and four grandparents had directed nearly all their resources into Ying's education in mathematics. Ying's advisor, Tory, knew Ying's secondary school preparation would help him excel in his math and science classes, but recognized that Ying did not understand the value of general education courses, which do not receive much credence in Ying's home country. Tory registered Ying for 12 credits in math and science fields and one 3-hour general education course because the learning required in the humanities course represents an approach to academics foreign to Ying and would require some mastery in a language other than numbers. That semester, Ying earned three As and one C.

Ying was ashamed of the C he earned in the humanities course and felt immense relief upon learning that neither his parents nor grandparents could access his grades. Tory consistently supported Ying, explaining to him that his experience in the humanities course would help him earn higher grades in other general education courses, but Ying's deflated ego had affected his confidence in his overall academic abilities. Therefore, in addition to continued encouragement and explanations about general education requirements, Tory connected Ying with one of the math professors from his home country who had overcome the same challenges that Ying faced.

Advisors need to learn about the academic and cultural identities of international students. What would have happened to Ying if he had registered for the traditional 10 or 12 credits of general education and perhaps one 5-credit course in a STEM discipline? He had formed his identity in multiple ways: as a proud citizen of his country, as an only son, as an accomplished math major. With one C, however, Ying fell short of his own expectations, and he felt like a failure. Fortunately, Tory understood the nuances of Ying's identity development initiated in a culture unlike that nurtured in the United States and proffered advice that would ease Ying into the American educational environment and allow him to adjust to new academic experiences.

Social Constructivist Theory of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative advising brings together multiple psychosocial theories, but it is primarily rooted in the social constructivist theory of appreciative inquiry and positive psychology. Using appreciative advising, practitioners ask advisees positive, probing, open-ended questions that assist them in capturing their own stories, strengths, educational goals and objectives, and accomplishments (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008).

Positive-focused theories apply to all advisees, but an advisor familiar with appreciative advising knows intuitively when such a positive approach may specifically enhance an individual's college experience. For example, Stevie, an adult student on academic probation, sits in Kelsey's office expressing frustration at attempts to balance work, family, and school. Over time, and by applying the six phases of appreciative advising (disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle) (Bloom et al.,

2008), Kelsey helps Stevie optimize an educational plan, maximize time that Stevie can spend on campus, and recognize the strengths, abilities, and accomplishments that Stevie contributes to all realms of life.

In their initial meeting, Kelsey affirms the advisor–advisee relationship by making positive inquiries and actively listening to Stevie’s responses. Specifically, in the disarm phase, Kelsey asks about family, goals, work, challenges, hobbies, and children. By establishing trust and coming to know Stevie as a whole person, not just a nontraditional business major, Kelsey welcomes Stevie to come to the office with concerns. Then, invoking the discovery phase, Stevie, who feels safe talking with Kelsey, reveals strengths, skills, and accomplishments—raising a family, serving as a volunteer fire fighter, and coaching a youth league sports team—in which Stevie takes pride. Because Stevie has chosen to attend college, Kelsey realizes that at least one of Stevie’s dreams remains unfulfilled and helps Stevie articulate it.

In the deliver phase, Kelsey and Stevie assemble a realistic, doable plan built on Stevie’s strengths and dreams. Finally, in the don’t settle phase, Kelsey encourages Stevie to persist, not just to graduation, but in honing the learning style that has proven most effective to achieving goals, growing efficient in studying and time management, and keeping the vision that stems from Stevie’s dream, even when the inevitable roadblocks seem to stop progress.

In some cases, advising encounters do not go smoothly or relationships are not established easily, but advisor employment of appreciative inquiry and positive psychology, over time, helps advisees to recognize their strengths and accomplishments. Appreciative advising helps them see that they possess the drive and ability to keep going when they hit bumps in the road.

Advice for Advisors

Advisors, whether faculty, professional, or peer, bring multiple experiences and backgrounds to their advising practices. Applying theory to practice may challenge new advisors, but when theory begins to make sense, many will find it fascinating and will seek further exploration.

Pragmatic reasons for knowing theory include initiating reasoned and appropriate conversations; that is, an advisor with some knowledge of theory will more efficiently and effectively ask questions that lead to greater understanding of the advisee’s experiences and expectations. A theory-based process also places the decision-making responsibility on the advisee because the advisor guides the advisee toward making appropriate choices rather than prescribes actions; the advisor coaches the advisee rather than mandates instructions.

Even as they gain confidence in use of theory, advisors learn that student development stages remain fuzzy. The theories do not support a pristine, singular approach to leading students toward good academic and life decisions. The art and the science of advising embody developmental, cognitive, and identity theories as well as stages of transition and appreciative inquiry. Advisors apply these and other approaches in

a workable fashion for themselves and their advisees, building on the experience of each to create satisfying and meaningful relationships in the process of student persistence and degree completion. Theory matters in effective advising because, to advisors, advisees matter.

Aiming for Excellence

- Invite a faculty member to provide an overview of developmental theories followed by a discussion in which advisors brainstorm about application of those theories to case studies provided by advisors.
- Attend or organize a common reading program focused on advising theories used or being discussed on campuses, such as Baxter Magolda's (2010) theories on self-authorship or Bloom et al.'s (2008) application of appreciative advising.
- Hold informal gatherings to discuss applying theory; best practices; and the intersections of teaching, learning, and developmental theories. Encourage participants to dig deep to conceptualize one or two new ideas to subsequently share with the group. Create a list of the ideas and begin a scholarly deconstruction of them using publications from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.
- Discuss with other advisors how foundational theories apply to current student demographics. For example, address ways that Chickering's development vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) specifically apply to first-generation or recently immigrated students.
- Use an advising journal to evaluate the anticipated and realized outcome of theories used in practice. At the end of the first semester of advising, read through the journal and look for ways in which your advising style reflected your understanding of theory.
- Review appointment notes for one of your students. Try to determine where the student falls on Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of development. Discuss your conclusions with experienced advisors or your supervisor. Consider questions to ask the student in your next session.
- Observe an appointment with a veteran advisor. Discern where the student might fall on the continuum created by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors. Discuss your observations with the veteran advisor.
- Read through the case studies in Appendix B and apply Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors in analyzing the situations. Consider ways to prioritize the conference and the questions you would ask the student; that is, plan and visualize the advising session.
- Consider situations in which O'Banion's (1972/1994/2009) top-down regression theory proves useful. Review a student's file or look to a case study

offered in this *Guidebook* or elsewhere and generate a list of appropriate questions for the student in the situation presented.

- o After reading about Schlossberg's (1989) theory of mattering, list the ways you can indicate to students that they matter to you.

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