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Promoting Self-Authorship through Intentionally Designed Academic Advising Learning Activities

Concurrent Session #231

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My Perspectives

- The United States Air Force Academy
  - Highly selective, ~4,500 cadets
  - Academic, Military, and Athletic Mission
  - Chief, Academic Advising and First-year Programs
  - Asst Professor, Behavioral Sciences

- Colorado College
  - Small (~2000 students), highly selective, liberal arts
  - Faculty-based advising system
  - Supplementary advisor for first- and second-year students

- Doctoral Program
  - George Washington University
  - Dissertation: An Investigation of Self-Authorship, Hope, and Meaning in Life among Second-year College Students

The views expressed within are my own, and not those of USAFA, the Air Force or the United States Government.
During my academic advising sessions with students what would I do differently if I focused on learning first?
...transformational learning [DEEP LEARNING] that helps students “learn to negotiate and act on [their] own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those [they] have uncritically assimilated from others” (Mezirow 2000, 8).
The Self-Authoring Mind is able to take a step back from its environment and hold it as object, regarding his or her culture critically. The Self-Authoring mind is able to distinguish the opinions of others from one’s own opinions to formulate one’s own “seat of judgment”. The result is a “self-authoring” of one’s own identity that is independent from one’s environment. Guided by their own internal compass, such a person then becomes subject to his or her own ideology. These individuals tend to be self-directed, independent thinkers. (Kegan, 1994).

The ability “to construct knowledge in a contextual world, an ability to construct an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one’s internal identity” (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 2).
“the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” and answers the following three questions:

• How do I know?
• Who Am I?
• How do I want to construct relationships with others?

• Students who self-author consider multiple perspectives, reflect on their goals, and make decisions based on internally defined goals and perspectives (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994).

• “the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p.143).
Self-Authorship: A Holistic Model

3 Dimensions of Self-Authorship: A Holistic Model

- **Cognitive or Epistemological** – nature of knowledge, how they make meaning, reshaping beliefs
- **Intrapersonal** – views of self
- **Interpersonal** – interactions and relationships with others
How do I know? Who am I?

*How do I want to construct relationships with others?*

**Epistemological Foundation**
View knowledge as contextual
Develop an internal belief system via constructing, evaluating, and interpreting judgments in light of available frames of reference

**Intrapersonal Foundation**
Choose own values and identity in crafting an internally generated sense of self that regulates interpretation of experience and choices

**Self-Authorship**
Capacity to internally define a coherent belief system and identity that coordinates mutual relations with others

**Interpersonal Foundation**
Capacity to engage in authentic, interdependent relationships with diverse others in which self is not overshadowed by a need for others' approval, mutually negotiating needs, and genuinely taking others' perspectives into account without being consumed by them
Why is Self-Authorship Important?

- Essential in order to meet the Mental Demands of Modern Life, Kegan (1994)
- “Taking on adult responsibilities, managing one’s own life effectively, and making informed decisions as a member of a community requires something beyond learning particular skills and acquiring particular behaviors.” (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p.143).
- Calls from various agencies and the public for measures of student learning outcomes including: Autonomy, respect for others, problem-solving, responsible citizenship
- Self-Authorship “stands at the core of the contemporary college outcomes” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 29)
- Reality: Students are leaving college without the ability to self-author
# Epistemological Development Models

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<td><strong>Dualism:</strong> world viewed in absolute either/or terms; truth is assumed to be known; info is processed into one of two categories (right/wrong, good/bad, etc); authorities hold truth, so rely on authorities/experts instead of one’s own ideas; tasks that require thinking about options or many points of view are confusing.</td>
<td><strong>Received Knowing:</strong> knowledge comes from “experts” and authority figures; truth is absolute, concrete, factual (good/bad, right/wrong, true/false); learners receive knowledge from authorities; listening/observing is a way to learn; learner not source of learning.</td>
<td><strong>Absolute Knowing:</strong> knowledge is certain or absolute; obtained from authority (instructor); instructor’s role is to communicate knowledge appropriately; ensure students understand it; evaluation used as a tool to show teacher what students learned; content emphasized; teacher-centered.</td>
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<td><strong>Multiplicity:</strong> more tolerance for diverse viewpoints but temporary in areas where Authority “hasn’t found The Answer yet;” questions can legitimately have multiple answers; those who hold different beliefs are no longer seen as simply “wrong,” unable to adequately evaluate points of view, and question the legitimacy of doing so.</td>
<td><strong>Subjective Knowing:</strong> begin to develop unique vision of world; look inside self for knowledge; truth comes from firsthand experience, from intuition; everyone has right to own opinion—all opinions equally valid; there is no absolute authority; actively explore opinions, new sense of autonomy; can hold contradictory beliefs.</td>
<td><strong>Transitional Knowing:</strong> knowledge is partially certain/partially uncertain; students’ role is to understand (less emphasis on acquiring knowledge); students expected to take more responsibility; application emphasized; evaluation focuses on student understanding of material.</td>
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<td><strong>Relativism:</strong> knowledge is relative; uncertainty replaces absolutism; begin to have more faith in own experiences and ideas; begin to differentiate between an unconsidered belief and a considered judgment; Authorities are no longer resisted, but can be valued for their expertise; differing perspectives are not merely acknowledged, but seen as pieces of a larger whole.</td>
<td><strong>Procedural Knowing:</strong> describes two forms: separate focuses on evaluating/judging different points of view, is abstract and analytic; focus is on proving, disproving, convincing (objectivism); connected focuses on others’ experiences/reality; is narrative, holistic, objectivism achieved through other’s perspective; goal is to understand and be understood (constructivism).</td>
<td><strong>Independent Knowing:</strong> knowledge is uncertain—everyone has his/her own beliefs; independent thinking is valued - goal is to get students to think for themselves and to promote independent thinking; peers serve as a source of knowledge; teaching more student-centered.</td>
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<td><strong>Relativism in Commitment:</strong> knowledge and authorities are viewed in much the same way, but students have deliberately - through critical reflection - chosen a particular viewpoint, value, or belief as their own. The difference between this position and the Dualistic position is that the Committed Relativism recognizes that other perspectives may have validity; differing viewpoints are tolerated as long as such positions are supported with evidence and sound reasoning.</td>
<td><strong>Constructed Knowing:</strong> integration of knowledge gained from external and internal sources (personal experience and procedural knowledge); emotion and intellect are viewed as unified whole; knowledge is contextual - answers vary due to context in which the question is asked; self and others are on a joint journey to discover/construct knowledge - competence, not role, defines authority.</td>
<td><strong>Contextual Knowing:</strong> knowledge judged on basis of evidence in context; instructor promotes application of knowledge in context but also evaluative discussion of perspectives; emphasis on exchanging and comparing ideas, thinking through problems, integrating/applying knowledge.</td>
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“An evolving, growing learner who can…

- engage with the world of ideas and learn from experience
- examine and challenge assumptions
- arrive at commitments through self-reflection
- relate to others from a place of mutual enhancement rather than need.”

Journey Toward Self-Authorship

Phases

Following Formulas
- Believe what “authority” believes

Crossroads
- See need for own vision

Author of One’s Life
- Choose own beliefs

Internal Foundation
- Grounded in internal belief system

Cognitive development:
- How do I know?

Intrapersonal development:
- Who am I?

Interpersonal development:
- How we construct relationships

Approval seeking in relationships
- See need for authenticity
- Being true to self – mutual needs met
- Grounded in mutuality

Kegan, 1994; Baxter-Magolda, 2001
Following External Formulas

- Believe authority’s plans; how “you” know
- Define self through external others
- Act in relationships to acquire approval
- Rely on formulas in order to achieve academic success and make decisions.

What does this look or sound like in an academic advising setting?

Hello, I’m Natalie...
Meet Natalie

Natalie is a first-year student. Through the mid-semester early alert system it comes to your attention that she is not passing Chemistry or Calc I. You email and ask her to come meet with you to create a plan for improvement. You have already met with her one other time earlier in the semester and you know she wants to be a Dr (her father is a Dr.).

She arrives at your office noticeably troubled and on edge. When you ask her how she is doing she tells you that she has never gotten anything lower than an “A” in high school and that she just doesn’t understand why she isn’t getting the same grades here. She tells you that she diligently follows the syllabus, she does all the reading, and does that practice problems, but she still isn’t doing well on the tests/quizzes. She says, “I just don’t get it. Tell me what you think I need to do in order to get a good grade.”
Question plans; see need for own vision

Realize dilemmas of external self-definition; see need for internal identity

Realize dilemmas of external approval; see need to bring self to relationship

What does this look or sound like in an academic advising setting?

Natalie has made significant progress since her first semester. She ended up with a 2.8 GPA at the end of the first year and decided to declare BioChemistry. Over the summer she shadowed one of the Drs in her father’s practice and even got to scrub in to observe a surgery. She randomly contacts you and asks if you are willing to meet with her—you are no longer her advisor since she has declared a major. Of course you agree. When she arrives you hardly recognize her—dyed hair, multiple piercings, goth-style dress. After some small talk she tells you that she really dreads going to her science-math related courses but loves her sociology course. In addition, she tells you about her summer experience—including the details of the surgery, at least up to the point at which she passed out at the sight of blood. She says that she isn’t really sure that she still wants to be a Dr., but certainly doesn’t want to tell her father because he will be devastated!
Phase 1: Following Formulas
- Actions and beliefs are easily influenced by authorities and peers
- Motivated by the desire for approval and recognition from respected authority and/or peers
- Knowledge and beliefs are uncritically assimilated from authority

Phase 2: The Crossroads
- Dissatisfied with living by the directives of authority/peers
- Begin to recognize the role of their internal voice in their lives
- Motivated by a desire for self-definition, but are as yet unable to achieve it
- Begin to accept responsibility for evaluating knowledge claims and beliefs

Phase 3: Becoming Self-Authored
- Critically construct their own internal perspective and identity
- Define their own knowledge, beliefs, and values
- Accept the alternate perspectives and viewpoints of others
- Recognize knowledge as uncertain and contextual

Phase 4: Internal Foundation
- Use their internally defined identity to:
  - Engage multiple perspectives to redefine relationships
  - Critically evaluate knowledge and evidence in context
  - Construct knowledge of their own using their unique perspective

Think about a “Crossroads” moment for you...

- What was going on in your head?
- How did you feel?
- What resources did you seek out?
- How and Why was the situation finally resolved?
I want greater self-awareness, but can I continue to be unaware of my bad qualities?
Authoring One’s Own Life

- Choose own beliefs; how I know in context of external knowledge claims
- Choose own values, identity in context of external forces
- Act in relationships to be true to self; mutually negotiating how needs are met

What does this look or sound like in an academic advising setting?

It is the time of year when students are applying to graduate school and Natalie has asked you to write her a letter of recommendation. She is applying to Berkeley’s Masters of Arts in Social Change. She now admits that her desire to be a Dr. stemmed mainly from her father and that she really just wanted to be in a position to “help other people in a meaningful way.” Taking a number of community-based learning courses helped her to realize her passion for social change. She admits that it was difficult to break the news to her father, but she is ecstatic about her future. She recently broke up with her boyfriend of 2 years after realizing that he did not value the same things she thought were important. She admits that being alone is not easy, but it is “good for her.”
Journey Toward Self-Authorship

Fig. 1: Journey Toward Self-Authorship

- **Leading Edge:** Recognizing that multiple perspectives exist
- **Leading Edge:** Evaluating multiple perspectives based on internal beliefs
- **Leading Edge:** Acting consistently based on internal beliefs

**Developmental Phase**

- **Externally Focused**
- **Internally Focused**

**Self-Authored Life**

Promoting Self-Authorship

Vast majority of students are not achieving self-authorship in college

How do we encourage self-authorship?

- By encouraging students to make sense of their experiences rather than making sense of it FOR THEM.
- Appropriate balance of challenge and support—balancing contradiction with confirmation
- Applying principles of the Learning Partnership Model (LPM): Baxter-Magolda, King
Balancing Contradiction with Confirmation

Developmental Contradiction

- Good reflection: Where does that belief come from? How did you decide? What might be other options? What might keep you from broadening your perspective on this?

Developmental Confirmation

- Good reflection: How did you come to this decision? What are you particularly pleased about?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an important decision and it turned out well.
- Why do you think it turned out that way? What would you do again, what would you do differently?
Balancing Contradiction with Confirmation

**Developmental Contradiction**
- Look for times when students are stuck, resistant, on the verge of “settling.”

**Developmental Confirmation**
- Look for times when students are overwhelmed, answering lots of other questions, coping with too much stress, or just don’t seem “ready”
Tandem Journey

- We can be “good company”
- Provide “pedal power”
- Student “steers” and directs the journey

http://www.slideshare.net/mkempland/self-authorship-college-student-learning-and-development
Validate Learners’ Capacity to Know

Portray Knowledge as Complex & Socially Constructed

Self is Central to Knowledge Construction

Share Authority & Expertise

Internal Belief System

Internal Identity

Mutual Relationships

Learning Partnership

Situate Learning in Learner’s Experience

Define Learning as Mutually Constructing Meaning

Support

Learning Partnership Model: Principles

- **Validate students as knowers**
  - Increase confidence and autonomy such that students can construct their own ideas

- **Situating learning in students’ experience**
  - Help students to feel respected as knowers by providing a foundation for their learning

- **Define learning as mutually constructing meaning**
  - Help students to clarify their own perspectives and learn to work with others to enhance mutual understanding

(Pizzolato, 2006)
Time for your Participation!

- Look at the Learning Partnerships Model handout and back at Natalie. Choose 1\text{st}, Soph or Sr. Scenario.
- Turn to someone close to you.
- Come up with one specific example/series of questions/advising strategy to illustrate how you could apply one of these three principles in advising Natalie:
  - **Validate students as knowers**
    - Increase confidence and autonomy such that students can construct their own ideas
  - **Sitize learning in students’ experience**
    - Help students to feel respected as knowers by providing a foundation for their learning
  - **Define learning as mutually constructing meaning**
    - Help students to clarify their own perspectives and learn to work with others to enhance mutual understanding
**Learning Partnership Model Advising Practices to Facilitate Self-Authorship in Students**

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<tr>
<th>LPM 1: Validate Students as Knowers</th>
<th>LPM 2: Situate Learning in the Students’ Experience</th>
<th>LPM 3: Define learning as Co-constructing Meaning</th>
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<td>Encourage students to determine preferences and future activities of interest by researching and testing fields, taking classes, and talking to people working and studying in the fields of interest.</td>
<td>Talk about students’ experiences in different fields or courses. Focus both on student perceptions of their environments and their behaviors within them.</td>
<td>Discuss implications of particular choices and how choosing one major may impact other goals. Focus on the student’s feeling and processing of the gains and losses associated with the possibilities.</td>
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<td>Ask students to identify positive and negatives of various choices; ask them to focus on how different choices would affect progression toward their goals.</td>
<td>Remember to explicitly discuss contexts other than those at school. For example, ask the student about others who will be affected by the decision.</td>
<td>Present different options to students and guide them through the research process. Help each take initiative and receive feedback from him or her.</td>
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<td>Encourage students to construct lists of their own strengths or weaknesses.</td>
<td>If a student wants to change majors either because of denial of admission or a change in interests, ask for an explanation and understand.</td>
<td>Review goals and through brainstorming focus on alternative ways of fulfilling goals.</td>
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Creating Learning Partnerships

An academic advisor who has built a one-on-one relationship with a student over an extended period is in an ideal position to become a partner in helping shape the advisee’s academic experience. The author offers one model for taking full advantage of this opportunity.

By Jane Elizabeth Pizzolato

Advisor, Teacher, Partner: Using the Learning Partnerships Model to Reshape Academic Advising
Applying LPM in Advising to Promote Self-Authorship Development

- Create space for low-stakes, critical self-reflection and feedback
  - Written Reflections—see example
- Reflective Conversations
  - Use the conversation guide in Peer Review, 2008
- Ask guiding questions and let them figure out the answers; allow them find their own voice & take ownership of decisions
Toward Reflective Conversations: An Advising Approach that Promotes Self-Authorship

Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, distinguished professor of educational leadership, Miami University
Patricia M. King, professor, Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, University of Michigan

Academic advisers can play a special role in students’ lives, as they are in positions to brainstorm possible futures with their advisees and map out paths to get there. In partnership with other faculty and staff, they can use this opportunity to promote students’ self-authorship, the capacity to internally generate beliefs, values, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda 2001; Kegan 1994). Jane Pizzolato writes that “if students were self-authored, they would be more likely to choose majors that were appropriate and interesting to them, engage in critical thinking about their choices, and develop healthy relationships with diverse others” (2008, 19). Becoming self-authored requires transformational learning that helps students “learn to negotiate and act on [their] own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those imposed by others” (2008, 19).

As active agents in constructing knowledge, and their interest in acquiring others’ approval often restricts their ability to engage in debating multiple perspectives. For example, a student in a course where the instructor modeled knowledge construction offered this reaction:

I understand what he was trying to do. He was trying to give examples to show what happened. But if he had just said cryoprotectants whatever, just said the point, I would believe him because he is the teacher. I don’t need the proof, it’s not like I’m going to argue with him about it. (Baxter Magolda 1999, 3)

Her assumptions about knowledge precluded her from seeing that her instructor was modeling knowledge construction. Instead,
Applying LPM in Advising to Promote Self-Authorship Development

- Create space for low-stakes, critical self-reflection and feedback
  - Written Reflections—see example
  - Socratic Questioning to promote active, reflective conversations
- Group Advising or Pre-appointment assignments
  - See Sophomore Major Ranking example
- Decision-making/problem solving/goal-setting
  - See First-year goal-setting example
  - Highlight and Eliminate—Jeff Malone, Oregon State
Keep Questions Paramount

Use your Resources and Act as a Referral Agent—give students assignments and report back.

Model the search for knowledge and meaning making

Slow Down—Process is more important than Product!

Do what is comfortable for you as an advisor/teacher.

Be Authentic—Power of Storytelling

Turn more responsibility to the student—Balance Challenge with Support
Resources for Self-Exploration and Self-Assessment

Recommend free on-line assessments to help your students to better understand their values, interests, skills and personality traits. Here are a few of my favorites:

- [http://mymajors.com/](http://mymajors.com/) My majors.com is an on-line assessment that matches one’s interests and strengths and suggests majors that may be a good fit.
- [www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp](http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp) The Myers-Briggs personality inventory helps to identify preferences and matches answers to a four-letter personality profile.
- There are additional websites, such as [www.personalitypathways.com/](http://www.personalitypathways.com/), that provide detailed information and suggest careers for each personality type.
Resources for Major Exploration and Self-Assessment

Refer students to the array of web resources available to help them better understand academic and career information.

- [http://MyRoad.com](http://MyRoad.com) is College Board’s college and career planning website.
- [http://www.princetonreview.com/majors.aspx](http://www.princetonreview.com/majors.aspx) is The Princeton Review’s website and offers access to wide variety of educational information.
- Have students connect majors to careers through these websites:
  - [http://www.udel.edu/CSC/mrk.html](http://www.udel.edu/CSC/mrk.html)
  - [http://www.k-state.edu/acic/majorin/](http://www.k-state.edu/acic/majorin/)
  - [http://www.career.fsu.edu/occupations/matchmajor/](http://www.career.fsu.edu/occupations/matchmajor/)
Resources for Career Exploration: Creates a Goal to Shoot For!

- Refer students to the Road trip Nation site when they are searching for inspiration from others who have set out on a quest to find their passion and purpose at: www.roadtripnation.com.
- Narrow options by viewing the 16 Career Clusters located at http://www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.cfm.
- Review the Occupational Outlook Handbook website www.bls.gov/oco/ for the latest career information on including: education requirements, earnings, working conditions and projected job openings.
- The O*NET system, http://online.onetcenter.org/, serves as the nation's primary source of occupational information, providing information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations.
- Explore graduate and professional schools at www.petersons.com/gradchannel/ and start investigating future educational options.
Let’s continue the conversation!

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