

Youth Counselling and Career Guidance: What Adolescents are Telling Us

Professor. William A. Borgen

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada
President, International Association for Counselling

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is threefold: to discuss issues that high school students are often concerned about, to present one context for the post high school transition experience, and to discuss the implications of these findings for how high school guidance and counselling services might be offered.

Guidance and Counselling Services

Services are often comprised of components related to advising, guidance and counselling. Since the terms "advising", "guidance" and "counselling" are often used interchangeably in the literature, it may be useful to begin with a definition of each. These definitions are based on Borgen and Heibert (in press, 2002).

Advice or Advising

If I give general information regarding external requirements, I am doing vocational or career advising (Implies general information is sufficient for the issue presented).

Advice or advising pertains to non-personalized information regarding a certain topic or focus. The information pertains to this topic and the information's integrity is largely dependent on the reliability of the provider's knowledge or experience. This knowledge does not need a theoretical background or foundation in order to be credible. In terms of career or vocation, advice may be given by someone with knowledge in a field, such as a photographer or consultant who advises potential students on the personal or academic requirements for a career in their respective fields (Levine, 2000; Farrell, 1997). Advice on how to break into a field, succeed in a job interview (Stasny, 2001; Hagevik, 1998), or dress for an interview (Stasny, 2001; Smith, 1998) may be sought by a potential candidate. Advice on how to prepare for a career (Anderson, 2001) or what to do if you have lost a job may also be sought. In all of these situations, the provider of advice does not impart the information according to the audience, but according to the topic; the characteristics or qualities of the seeker does not affect the content of the advice. In general, the seeker of advice has already situated him/herself in accordance with the topic, and is looking for specific information regarding this topic.

According to many writers, advice seems to be either at a beginning or a latter stage of the career discovery process. At the beginning, advice about the general state of the economy or about prospective employment models could be useful in broadly situating the career client in his/her career discovery process. Conversely, gaining reliable advice about specific strategies (Villar et al., 2000) or circumstantial obstacles would seem to be important after one has already established a compatibility and/or interest in a career, and after one is familiar with his/her personal attributes. Thus, the advice can be assessed according to personal relevance and integrated into an established personal foundation.

Confusion is often experienced when encountering the terms career guidance and career counselling. Some of the difference between the terms stem from the role of information, the role of theory, the degrees of directiveness, and the nature of the interaction between the provider and seeker of assistance. Some authors, emphasize the similarities between the two terms, and suggest that counselling is recognized as an important function of guidance (Watts & Kidd, 2000). In the domain of career, guidance can be a superordinate term that subsumes counselling (Herr, 1997). With many clients, there is a strong argument for fusing career and personal coun-

selling (Herr, 1997); in most such cases, however, there is no way to meet career related needs without providing information, which adds a dimension of guidance to the activity. (Watts & Kidd, 2000).

Guidance

If I make a judgement about what information is being sought and provided it I am providing guidance. (Implies tailored information is sufficient).

Brown (1999) argues for a difference between the terms guidance and counselling. He suggests that the difference hinges on the role of information. In guidance, information provided on the basis of assessment plays a central role. This highlights the importance of assessment in the information providing. Unlike advising, guidance hinges on gaining specific information about the client, then matching the specific knowledge according to the relevance to this person. Additionally, career guidance can be considered more directive, and less integrative. "In careers guidance, people are frequently supplied with consideration thought to be important in making a career decision. To the extent that a person is required to use supplied considerations, he must learn to construe career alternatives in a relatively unfamiliar and perhaps less manageable language" (Cochran, 1977, p. 241, in Wilden & LaGro, 1998, p.182).

The role of theory in career guidance is somewhat illusive. For much of its early history, guidance was very directive in nature, and based on matching individuals to occupations. More recently guidance practitioners have focused on objectifying and standardizing their client's interests, values, and abilities with inventories, and in turn using the inventories to fit a person's attributes with an organization's (Savickas, 1993). When the client-centred approach (Rogers, 1951) was introduced to the world of counselling, this led to a more facilitative and integrative approach, which shifted the career guidance approach and practice to a somewhat more counselling-oriented paradigm.

Several authors have pointed out that career guidance does not have or use a well-formed theory for one-to-one guidance (Kidd et al., 1994; Wilden & La Gro, 1998). Kidd et al., (1994) studied how career guidance practitioners used theory in their interviews, and concluded that a debate about the role of theory in practice was advisable.

Finally, the nature of the interaction between the practitioner and clients is based on an interview or information gathering opportunity that will establish the type of information that the practitioner will provide. In this interview process, the practitioner is conveying information based on how s/he understands the client. "The practitioner must, therefore, make a conscious and continuous effort to give their clients entry in the flow of exchanges, so that the direction with its twists and turns does not solely satisfy the practitioner's interests" (Wilden & La Gro, 1998, p.176). In career guidance, however, authority or influence over the content of information and context of interviewing still largely rests with the practitioner.

Counselling

If I explore the other person's perspective, tentatively offer other perspectives to be considered (including information based on the initial exploration) and jointly discuss possible action planning, I am providing vocational or career counselling. (Implies that a counselling process is needed to consider the utility of different insights, feelings, and information and the applicability of different possible actions regarding the issue).

Career counselling is viewed as an interpersonal process that moves beyond providing client-relevant information to broader issues, such as career development, work-adjustment, work-dysfunction, and integration of life roles with other life roles that may or may not be directly related to work (Herr, 1997). Herr (1997) outlines 5 aspects of career counselling: 1) "Its principal content is the perceptions, anxieties, information deficits, work personalities, competencies, motives, that persons experience in their interactions with their external environment" (p. 85). 2) It is a multi-faceted process. 3) It has significant value throughout the life span. 4) It may be only one of many interventions used to confront the career problem. 5) It is best thought as a continuum of intervention processes with a broad range that fuse personal and career counselling. Other authors suggest that the focus of career counselling should be on facilitating personal meaning (Peavy, 1996; Constantine & Erickson, 1998).

The degree of involvement between counsellor and client is reminiscent of a working relationship that involves aiding the client in several tasks, such as perspective-taking skills, projectivity or agency, and persever-

ance (Chen, 1997). As the notion of career shifts, what is considered the objectives of career counselling may also evolve: "continued effort to learn, continued increases in knowledge and skills, expansion of interests, willingness to take on new roles, abilities to deal effectively with a greater variety of people, acceptance of open-mindedness about future directions, willingness to challenge old beliefs, willingness to take risks and keep an open mind, and reports or increased satisfaction with work and personal life" (Krumboltz, 1998a, 564). Given this eclectic picture of career counselling in the 21st century, the role of theory may be closely aligned with the training or orientation of the counsellor, or the specific interventions used.

Adolescent Issues, Coping Strategies and Preferred Types of Assistance

The International Research Seminar, the research arm of the International Association for Counselling, facilitated two studies that focused on problematic issues identified by adolescents from different countries, along with the coping strategies they used to address these issues, who they sought out to help them, and the characteristics of effective helpers from the adolescents' point of view (Gibson-Cline, 1996; Gibson-Cline, 2000). The earlier study surveyed younger adolescents, while the focus of the later study was on older adolescents. Both studies used the same questionnaire instrument for the purpose of tracking trends and discrepancies. The research questions driving the 2000 study were:

- What did male and female subjects from advantaged, non-advantaged, and poverty populations tell us about the concerns that caused them stress, how they coped and the helpers to whom they went for help?
- For those countries in which responses were collected in both studies, how did our subjects' answers in the 2000 study compare with those of their 1996 younger adolescent peers? How did they compare with the composite picture of subjects in the 2000 multinational study?
- What do the answers to these questions suggest regarding helping strategies most likely to be effective for given nations, Socio-economic groups and genders, and what generalizations might we make concerning what creates an effective intervention? (Gibson-Cline, 2000).

In this paper, I will summarize the results of the second study, which involved 3193 older adolescents from 12 countries. The international research team involved in this study collaboratively designed a cross-cultural and cross-sectional data-gathering approach. This study involved participants from different socio-economic statuses (SES): advantaged, non-advantaged, and poverty. Adolescents who were characterized as advantaged had "parents who were literate, employed in skilled professions earning average to high incomes for that country, and who lived in average to wealthy neighbourhoods, and whose educational aspirations were usually higher-education" (Gibson-Cline, 2000, p.9). The non-advantaged adolescents had "parents who were not all literate, below average educations as per national norms, non-skilled jobs earning average to below income for that country, and who lived in average-to-below average economic areas, and whose educational aspirations were usually secondary school" (Gibson-Cline, 2000, p.9). The adolescents who were represented in the poverty category had "parents who were often not literate, whose education was below national average per national norms, who were unemployed or employed in lowest paying jobs in that country, and who resided in poverty areas or less-than-adequate housing, and whose educational aspirations were usually primary education, and whose food and medical coverage was not always adequate to meet basic needs" (Gibson-Cline, 2000, p.9). Other sampling considerations were gender and national and cultural backgrounds.

Problems Identified

Problems identified across countries can be grouped according to the following headings:

Schooling

Advantaged students express worries about time pressures, academic achievement, and the need for high grades. Non-advantaged students expressed concerns that their jobs interfered with their ability to learn at school. Those living in poverty seemed to be concerned with meeting basic needs, helping family members with issues and problems and personal challenges related to gaining employment, self-identity, and schooling.

Identity and Self-Concept

Issues in this area were second greatest for adolescents of both the advantaged and non-advantaged group. This concern was linked to issues related to becoming an adult, choices regarding career, gender roles, educational choices, and becoming financially independent (Gibson-Cline, 2000, p. 43-44). Issues related to identity and young people living in poverty raised self-concept least frequently.

Family

Issues related to this theme were greatest for adolescents living in poverty. Also, young women most often identified issues related to family concerns, across a range of cultures (i.e. India ñ arranged marriages; Brazil ñ extended family responsibility; England ñ divorce and familial dysfunction) (Gibson-Cline, 2000).

Employment

Employment and family issues were often intertwined. Employment issues were prevalent for both young men and young women, and were more frequent among those adolescents living in poverty, especially in the area of gaining employment.

In summary, young men reported more concerns about schooling, while young women reported more issues related to family. Both reported issues related to self-identity. In this area young men reported worrying about becoming adults, developing self-confidence and living up to self-expectations, while young women reported concerns about self-abuse and physical appearance. Reported family problems increased as SES decreased, and young women reported more family problems in each SES than young men. Many countries' young people did not talk about major problems (AIDS and drugs) as personal concerns but as social issues.

Coping Strategies

Coping Strategies were varied. The most frequent coping strategy (48%-65%) by all socio-economic groups and both genders was individual problem solving, which included planning that included assessment of the situation and plans of action (reported by 23% of the adolescents in the study). Other coping strategies were disengagement and resignation regarding problems encountered; escaping the problems encountered by avoiding addressing them and distancing themselves from their problems physically or mentally; and lastly complete resignation and giving up. This was conceptualized as a non-goal oriented approach. Interestingly, advantaged adolescents than by their less advantaged peers used this non-goal oriented approach more often. It is interesting to note that this form of coping increased in frequency from the 1996 to the 2000 studies. Other strategies also reported were trying harder (reported by 20%) and seeking assistance (reported by young women more than young men).

Desired Qualities in Helpers

The young people in the study sought help outside the family three times more often than inside. Friends were a number one source of help for all groups. Advantaged young people went to professional helpers most often. Adolescents from both advantaged and non-advantaged groups looked for helpers who were good listeners, trustworthy and honest. They also wanted helpers who had knowledge about the issues being discussed, and were similar to them or who had the experiences similar to theirs. The youth wanted the helpers to counsel them, provide advice and information, as well as offer comfort and re-assurance. As the seriousness of the problems increased the focus on advice and guidance decreased and the focus on support and counselling increased.

Summary

The results of this study of older adolescents from 12 countries closely parallel the results of the earlier study of younger adolescents in terms of issues raised, coping strategies and qualities of helpers (Gibson-Cline, 1996). It is interesting to note, however, that the older adolescents placed a heavier emphasis on being listened to and offered comfort and support rather than just being given information and advice. The results of these studies contain several implications and challenges for guidance and counselling in secondary schools. Some of these will be addressed later in the paper.

The Transition from High School

I have been involved for several years in studying the experience of unemployment for adults and young people (Borgen and Amundson, 1987; Amundson and Borgen, 1987; Amundson and Borgen, 1995). The young people in our initial unemployment study were mostly secondary school graduates who had little or no post secondary education. They indicated that they expected to find employment easily and, when this did not happen, they often felt bewildered and frustrated.

Because jobs did not seem to be readily available, young people expressed little interest in continuing with job search. They turned instead to other leisure activities, which helped to reduce their boredom, but did little to further their chances of finding a job. They also turned increasingly to their friends for support. Unemployed youth, however, often experience "decreased familial support and increased family conflict and tensions" (Hess, Petersen & Mortimer, 1994, p. 16). They described many situations in which they were still in the role of "child" (e.g., being ordered to do things by parents, being unable to make decisions for themselves, etc.). They also described reactions to these situations that may have been expected of adolescents 14 or 15 years old rather than by young adults ranging in age from 18 to 24. That is, they complained about too much direction from parents and said that they felt helpless and unable to change their situations. This observation is consistent with the research findings of Tiggemann and Winefield (1984). Work plays an important part in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and when young people cannot find employment, there is greater likelihood of a slowing down in psychosocial development (Gurney, 1980; Meeus, Dekovic, & Ledema, 1997).

In considering the patterns of experience of unemployed young people, it is important to address the questions often asked by many of them, namely "What happened? Did I do something wrong?" Accompanying economic turmoil is a considerable amount of second guessing of actions and a lowering of self-confidence. In the face of economic change, a sense of personal control can be diminished and feelings of isolation and helplessness can be engendered. Regaining confidence and personal control requires the support of others, success experiences, an involvement in meaningful activities, and a will to persevere in the face of difficult situations.

Studies of unemployed young people and school drop-outs led Dr. Amundson and me to question the preparation of youth for the new realities of the competitive labour market and reduced post secondary education opportunities (Borgen, Amundson, & Tench, 1996; Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999). We then designed two longitudinal studies to track the experience of young people beginning in their final year of high school until eighteen months after graduation (Borgen & Amundson, 2000). Together, these studies involve data collection in four cities across Canada. The quantitative part of the study focused on the following variables: perceived difficulties, attributions for transition problems, work attitudes, perceived support, and psychological well-being. We also administered open-ended questionnaires and interviewed some of the participants. The findings of the study follow.

Expectations

In the final month of secondary school we asked young people in our first transition study to rate on a five point Likert scale the likelihood of their entering jobs of their choice. Of the 245 who responded, 183 or 75% were certain or very certain that they would attain their first job choice. Students were also asked to write a few sentences regarding their expectations about their career future. Their responses were then categorized into themes. Of the 214 who responded, 62% indicated that they expected to be successful, work in positions that were challenging, rewarding, enjoyable, and that offered personal satisfaction. In addition, 10% wrote about the opportunity to make money and 7% indicated the importance of job stability and security. Only 7% wrote about being worried, unsure, or having low expectations.

The students were also asked about perceived barriers to reaching their career goals. Of the 195 students who responded, 51% listed concerns about meeting post secondary education entrance requirements, or being able to compete for post secondary programs or jobs. Another 24% listed barriers regarding the costs of post secondary education.

Finally, we asked the students what advice they would give younger people about career planning. Their responses follow: Pursue own interests (29%); Keep as many options open as possible (19%); Don't decide quickly/take time (14%); Decide early on in high school (14%); Keep long term focus/plan carefully (11%); Test interests via work experience (8%); Explore/develop abilities (5%).

Positive and Negative Factors

Approximately eighteen months after graduation, sixty students from one of the cities involved in the study were interviewed regarding their experiences. As part of the interview they were asked about factors that they perceived as helpful or hindering in their post high school experience. Positive factors mentioned included: supportive family and friendship relationships; making money; satisfying leisure activities; personal achievements; education related success such as being able to enroll in desired courses or receiving scholarships; full, part time or volunteer work; moving into one's own living quarters; travel; and changing seasons (i.e. from winter to spring).

In addition, to the positive factors, several negative factors were outlined. These included: relationship problems with family and friends; personal difficulties involving sickness or pregnancy; career confusion; unemployment; financial problems; problems related to work such as underemployment; job insecurity; boring and meaningless jobs; problems involving not being able to get into desired programs and courses; difficulty in adjusting to post secondary demands and life style; and again, changing seasons (i.e. from summer to fall or winter).

In terms of the developmental issues, it is evident that the young adults in the study were attempting to address both their career and relationship needs. It is also clear that the personal relationship issues were in flux and acted as both positive and negative influences on their post high school experience. It is interesting to note that career was an area of turmoil, characterized both as a source of growth and stress. The interviews further illustrated that there is an interaction between being stymied by career barriers and being able to address personal relationship needs. If a young person is unable to move on to employment or further education the type and range of peer contact is greatly influenced. This often makes it difficult to gain a sense of growth or expanded independence, important aspects of development for young adults.

Social Support

One of the issues that became clear in the interviews at the end of the study was the importance of social support. Many of the young people reported feeling supported by both parents and friends. Participants were asked to describe the types of support they considered important and the sources of that support. It was evident from these young people that they received both positive and negative support from friends, family, and others. It was also clear that families offered different types of support than friends. Friends were relied upon mainly for emotional support, while families were mainly looked to for both emotional and material support.

Psychological Well-being

The quantitative results further suggest that the post high school transition period is a time of personal and career related turmoil. Psychological well being as indicated by measures of depression, self-esteem and anxiety were correlated with a range of perceived problems. Most prominent were money and activity problems, attribution of problems for general transition problems, attribution of unemployment problems, lack of job satisfaction and lack of support from family and friends. The data suggest that the ways in which young people make sense of their situations, their ability to meet basic needs for financial security, their opportunities to engage in meaningful leisure and work activities, and the support of others are crucial in maintaining a positive sense of self. The data also support the assertion that individual and contextual personal and career issues are important in the late high school/transition period.

Summary

A major feature of the studies of transition experiences of young people was the positive and negative personal and career related experiences that characterized this period of time. Traditionally, the period of late adolescence is seen as a time of personal identity formation from adolescence to adulthood. Havighurst (1952) described two predominant issues as work and relationships, while Erikson (1968) focused on the importance of intimacy and commitment to goals. Levinson (1978) cited the importance of changing relationships and exploration in the lives of young adults. Crystallizing vocational choice and exploring it was viewed by Super (1963) as a critical developmental issue to be addressed. All of these theorists refer to the importance of older adoles-

cents and young adults being able to address vocational issues and/or personal relationship issues.

The assumption made by these and other theorists was that young people would move from a primary attachment to their parents to experimenting with and consolidating friendship and intimate relationships with peers. The period was characterized by some turmoil and uncertainty as new relationships developed and dissolved. In considering vocationally related issues, however, the assumption made was that young people would engage in self-exploration on their own or with the assistance of family, friends or a professional helper. If a professional was seen, tests of intelligence or ability, personality and interests were often used as tools in assisting the self-exploration process. The goal of this guidance-based activity was to help the young person develop an expanded awareness of the areas to target in choosing a viable career option.

The premise underlying many of the developmental and career models was that the area of personal relationship development was in a state of flux and change, but that the transition into a job or career area was much calmer and more within the control of the young person involved. The studies of problems identified by adolescents, as well as those focusing on youth unemployment and transition from school indicate a different reality for young people. Personal relationships remain in turmoil, but the option to become financially and personally independent is often hindered by a lack of economic resources, educational opportunities and support. In the career area, the former expectations related to exploration, and particularly choice, have drastically altered. Career options, formerly seen as constant or expanding, are now viewed as moving targets that are often hidden and offer limited opportunities.

The experience of youth when the career aspects of their lives could be taken for granted as being available, while they grew and changed personally, is qualitatively different from the experience when both personal and career areas are in flux. The second scenario is the reality for many of our young people. It can bring with it new opportunities for young people as well as additional sources of stress and disappointment. It also means that it is necessary to examine the assumptions and frameworks that are the basis of the advising, guidance and counselling services that we offer in high schools and in the post high school period.

A Future of Ongoing Transitions

Given the ongoing and accelerating rate of change and uncertainty in several countries around the world, it is likely that adolescents will encounter a life of ongoing transitions in their personal, social, educational and career futures. Authors like Bridges (1991, 1994), Schlossberg (1984), and Schlossberg and Robinson (1996) have proposed models of transition that involve an evolutionary continuum of moving into the transition, a period of confusion in the middle, and then moving out or beyond the transition process and getting on with one's life.

What happens in the current context is that adolescents may increasingly become stranded in the middle phases of confusion and need assistance. The post high school studies cited earlier in the paper indicated that about 30% of the young people could be characterized as being stuck in the middle phases of transition. The middle period has been described as a time of readjustment of perceptions of career and personal identity, with rapid shifts in emotion (Borgen & Amundson, 1984, 1987), and as a time of feeling lost (Schlossberg, 1984). This is a time when young people will likely look for assistance from friends, family or professional helpers.

Effectively Maneuvering Through Transitions

In considering what is needed in high school guidance and counselling programs to effectively assist adolescents, it may be useful to consider some of the orientations, attitudes and skills they will need. Some of these include: facing ongoing rapid change in work and personal environments (Cote, 1996; Reitzele et al., 1998); being required to achieve mastery in some areas of life without being able to meet basic needs in other areas (Loughead et al., 1995; Newman, 1996; McWhirter & McWhirter, 1995); experiencing project based careers and fragmented careers (Krumboltz, 1998); engaging in ongoing learning (Cornford, 2002); making sense out of a range of contradictory information (Kraus & Hughey, 1999; Ladany et al., 1997); being flexible and innovative in times of uncertainty (Blustein et al., 1997; Ladany et al., 1997); being resilient and managing in chaotic environments (Krumboltz, 1998b; Mitchell et al., 1999); accessing accurate, relevant and up to date information (Blustein et al., 2000); expecting the unexpected while remaining optimistic (Gelatt, 1989, 1995); remaining hopeful and self-confident (Blustein, 1989; Evans & Heinz, 1994); feeling included and competent; engaging in activities that

promote self-recycling and self-renewal; being self-sustaining (Blustein et al., 1989a,b; Newman, 1996).

The Role of Advising, Guidance and Counselling

It is evident from the material just cited that the context of adolescents has changed radically from the context of the early and middle parts of the last century when guidance and counselling services in schools were developed in various parts of the world. There is still a place for advising, guidance and counselling, but we need to reconsider how they are offered and their utility in the current milieu.

In terms of when each is offered, in many situations advising comes first ñ with information being provided to students regarding secondary or post secondary program requirements, community services etc. This information may or may not be tailored to the individuals or groups it is presented to. Advising is useful in providing an overview of a situation, or to clarify by providing additional details. It is useful to the extent that the person providing it is up to date and knows for how long the information may be valid in the current context of rapid change. Some of the problems with advising are that students may not relate to the information or know what to do with it. This may be the case particularly if they are discouraged about their prospects, are in the middle of a difficult transition. In the area of career, for example, educational and job opportunities often change so rapidly that the information may no longer be useful when the student attempts to use it. If advising is not seen to be sufficient, guidance is sometimes available. Within the context of guidance, there is more of a focus on the individual who is receiving the service. Often some forms of assessment are conducted to encourage expand the person's awareness of areas of strength or interest. The goal here is to encourage the person to examine and discuss possible opportunities. This can be useful in having the individual receiving the service become more aware of the opportunities and options where their abilities and interests may be well utilized. Problems can occur when an individual cannot relate to or access the opportunities for which they seem best suited.

In the high school transition studies described earlier in the paper the advising and guidance services that had been received tended to have students leave high school with one plan that they were optimistic about being able to implement. The students did not seem to be well equipped to develop other effective plans or seek further assistance when those plans did not work out.

As was seen in the results from the study of adolescents from twelve countries, the type of assistance desired combined clear and accurate information and ideas within a context of being listened to and cared about ñ which is a fairly good description of counselling. This service is often less available than advising or guidance and is often seen as appropriate for individuals who are more troubled. While it is the case that counselling is needed for individuals who have more complex issues to address, given the complexity of the context in which individuals now need to make decisions, it may be appropriate to make counselling based processes available to more individuals and make it available earlier in the help seeking process. This, however, will require some re-thinking of the conceptualization of the terms advising, guidance and counselling.

As was mentioned earlier in the paper counselling is often seen to be a part of guidance. I think that it would be worthwhile to consider information or guidance to be a tool to be used as suitable within a counselling process. This would help to ensure that whatever information is provided, is offered within a context which is clearly linked to the needs of the person receiving it, and that there is sufficient opportunity for counselling based interaction that the information has a greater chance being considered within the broader context of the person's life. A description of a program that uses this approach follows.

A New Use for Counselling Processes

It has been my experience in working with adolescents and adults in the broadly defined area of career planning and development that, given the rapid rate of change they are experiencing, people often don't know what information to seek out, or they have been in a protracted state of transition so long that they are discouraged to the point of not recognizing information and other resources that may in fact be helpful for them. It has also been my experience that many helpers are stuck in the old advising and guidance paradigms where the focus is on providing either general or tailored information that may or may not be used. Also, the changing context of vocational, career opportunities and life opportunities is often foreign to the experience of the helpers themselves,

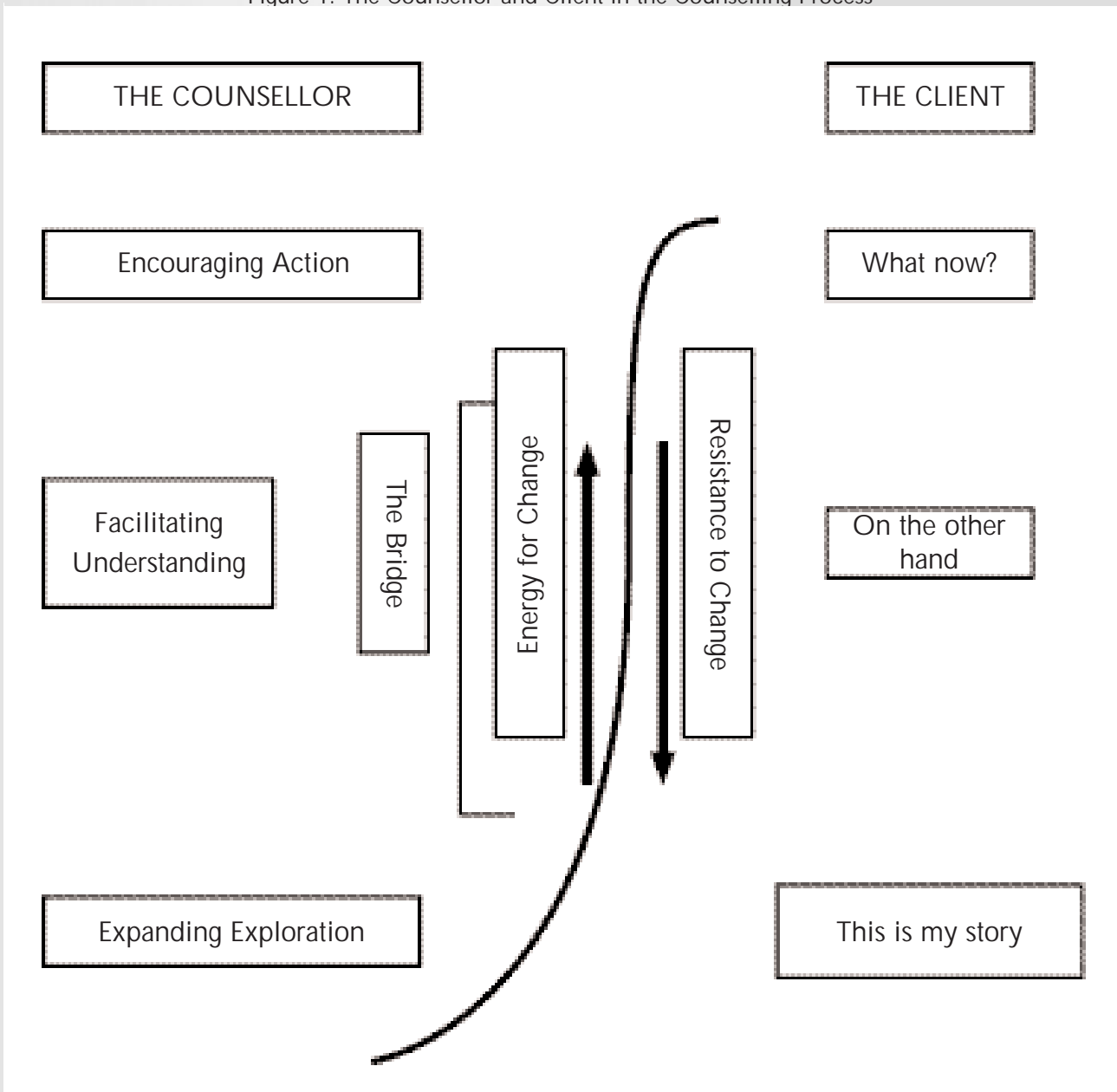
making it difficult for them to help those with whom they work be creative in seeing possibilities.

In response to these observations, I have been involved in developing a counselling based needs assessment process called "Starting Points" (Borgen, 1995; Borgen & Amundson, 1996; Borgen, 1999) that has been implemented with unemployed adults and with students in high school. The aim of the program, which is group based, is to connect individuals with their strengths and with the community resources they need to make informed decisions about whether they need advising, guidance, counselling or some other service. The overall goal of the program is to help people see more possibilities for themselves, develop the self-confidence to investigate those possibilities and help make them resilient in facing the setbacks which can be expected in implementing career related action plans. The program involves activities and discussions focused on the following major areas: Developing a Relationship; Defining Specific Issues; Acknowledging and Normalizing Reactions; Focusing on Assets and Strengths; Focusing on Required Resources; Planning Next Steps (Borgen, 1997; 1999). The program was also offered within a person centred (Egan, 1975), group counselling format (Borgen, Pollard, Amundson & Westwood, 1989) that is illustrated in figure 1.

In the context of this program the counsellor is a bridge connecting:

- the client's and counsellor's perceptions of the client's situation,
- the client with new internal perspectives regarding issues of support, strengths and skills,
- the client with new external perspectives regarding resources that may be of assistance, and
- the client with action strategies that are desirable and doable from the perspective of the client. Accomplishing these tasks requires an orientation on the part of the counsellor that requires:
 - Clear intentions: Is the goal to help the client meet an external goal (i.e., Get a job), or become more self-sufficient and resilient in terms of career decision-making or problem solving, or is it both?
 - An evolving relationship of mutual trust with the client, with empathy as a major attitude and skill.
 - Courage to use a repertoire of approaches to challenge initial views held by the client, based on the client's level of awareness and personal orientation to their problems ñ to put the problem in perspective.

Figure 1: The Counsellor and Client in the Counselling Process



As I indicated earlier the goal of this program was to increase awareness of relevant community resources within a context that promoted self-examination and confidence building. It was hoped that this would increase career resilience, career self-reliance, and career self-management (Brown, 1996; Griffith, 1998; King, 2001; Krumboltz, 1998a; and Waterman et al., 1994), within an environment that was personally and contextually chaotic (Gelatt, 1989, 1995; Borgen 2001). A follow-up study that investigated the effectiveness of the "Starting Points" program indicated that it had met most of its goals (Borgen, 1999). Of particular interest was the shift in perception of the individuals who participated in the program. When asked to describe their situations prior to the program, ninety-two percent of the statements reflected high levels of distress, feeling lost and hopeless. Only seventeen percent of statements used by individuals to describe their situations immediately after the program were similarly negative. In the face of renewed obstacles to progress, this percentage increased to twenty-nine percent an average of three months after completing the program. Other parts of the evaluation of the program indicated that individuals had received the information that they needed, and were much more self-directed following the program.

Summary and Conclusions

Guidance and counselling programs in secondary schools take various forms depending on regional and cultural priorities. The studies that I have reviewed and have been involved in would suggest that, to be effective, it is important that these programs begin with focusing on the needs expressed by the young people themselves. It is also important to employ counselling processes early in order to build self-confidence and to help ensure that information provided is understandable and useable. Finally, it is important to include activities and processes that help adolescents become better prepared to function more independently in adapting whatever plans they develop to changing personal orientations and contextual opportunities.

References

- Amundson, N.E., & Borgen, W.A. (1987). Coping with Unemployment: What helps and hinders. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 24, 97-106.
- Amundson, N. E., & Borgen, W.A. (1995). *At the controls: Charting your course through unemployment*. (4th Ed). Toronto: Nelson Canada.
- Anderson, M. (2001). So you want to be a professor! *Physics Today*, 54(4), 50-55.
- Blustein, D.L. (1989). The role of goal instability and career self-efficacy in the career exploration process. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol 35(2), 194-203.
- Blustein, D.L., Devenis, L. E., and Kidney, B. (1989a). Relationship between the identity formation process and career development. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36(2), 196-202.
- Blustein, D. L., Ellis, M. V, & Devenis, L. E. (1989b). The development and validation of a two dimensional model of the commitment to career choice process. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 35, 342-378.
- Blustein, D.L., Juntunen, C.L. and Worthington, R.L., (2000). The school-to-work transition: Adjustment challenges of the forgotten half. In Brown, S. D. and Lent, R. W. (Eds). *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* (3rd ed.). (pp. 435-470). New York, NY, US: John Wiley & Sons.
- Blustein, D.L., Phillips, S.D, Jobin-Davis, K., Roarke, A.E. (1997). A theory-building investigation of the school-to-work transition. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 25, 364-402.
- Borgen, W.A. (1995). *Starting points: Finding your route to employment* (B.C. Edition). Victoria/Ottawa: Assessment, Counselling and Referral Initiative of MOEST and HRDC.
- Borgen, W.A. (1997) People caught in changing career opportunities. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 34, 133-143.
- Borgen, W.A. (1999). Implementing "Starting Points": A follow-up study. *Journal of Employment Counseling* 36, 98-114.
- Borgen, W. A. (2001). Working with adults in transition: Developing chaos competence. Unpublished paper. UBC: Vancouver.
- Borgen, W. A., & Amundson, N. E. (1984). *The experience of unemployment*. Toronto: Nelson Canada.
- Borgen, W.A., & Amundson, N. E. (1987). The dynamics of unemployment. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 66, 180-184.
- Borgen, W.A. & Amundson, N.E. (1996). *Starting points for youth*. Victoria: MOEST.
- Borgen, W. A. & Amundson, N. E. (2000) Youth unemployment and the transition from high school. *Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 24, 32-43.
- Borgen, W.A., Amundson, N.E., & Tench, E. (1996). Psychological well-being throughout the transition from adolescence to adulthood. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 189-1999.
- Borgen, W. A., & Hiebert, B. (in press, 2002) Understanding the context of technical and vocational education and training. In Hiebert, B., & Borgen, W.A. (Co-editors), *Technical and vocational education and training in the twenty-first century: New roles and challenges for guidance and counselling*. Paris: UNESCO.

- Borgen, W.A., Pollard, D., Amundson, N. & Westwood, M. (1989). *Employment groups: The counselling connection*. Toronto: Lugas Press. Translated into Swedish (1990), Hungarian (1993), Finnish (1997), Danish (1998).
- Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bridges, W. (1994). *Job shift, how to prosper in a workplace without jobs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- Brown, B.L. (1996). *Career resilience* (ERIC Digest No. 178). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education.
- Brown, J. (1999). Does guidance have a future?: notes towards a distinctive position. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 27(2), 275-283.
- Chen, C.P. (1997). *Perspectivity, projectivity, and perseverance: The 3 Ps in career counselling*. *Guidance & Counseling*, 13(1), 6-10.
- Constantine, M.G. and Erickson, C.D. (1998). *Examining social constructions in vocational counselling: implications for multicultural counselling competencies*. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 11(2), 189-200.
- Cornford, I.R. (2002). *Learning-to-learn strategies as a basis for effective lifelong learning*. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(4), 357-368.
- Cote, J.E. (1996). *Sociological perspectives on identity formation: the culture-identity link and identity capital*. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19, 491-496.
- Egan, G. (1975) *The skilled helper*. Monterey:Brooks/Cole.
- Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Evans, K. & Heinz, W.R. (Eds.) (1994). *Becoming Adults in England and Germany*. London: Anglo-German Foundation.
- Farrell, L. A. (1997). *So you want to be a consultant....* *Records Management Quarterly*, 31(1), 21-27.
- Gelatt, H.B. (1989). *Positive uncertainty: A new decision-making framework for counseling*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36 (2), 252-256.
- Gelatt, H.B. (1995). *Chaos and compassion*. *Counseling and Values*, 39(2), 108-116.
- Gibson-Cline, J. (Ed.) 1996), *Adolescence: From Crisis to Coping*. London: Routledge
- Gibson-Cline, J. (Ed.) (2000), *Youth and Coping in Twelve Nations*. London: Routledge.
- Griffith, C. (1998). *Building a resilient work force*. *Training*, 35(1), 54-56, 58, 60.
- Gurney, R.M. (1980). *The effects of unemployment on the psycho-social development of school-leavers*. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 53, 205- 213.
- Hagevik, S. (1998). *Negotiating your way to success*. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 62(10), 34-36.
- Havighurst, R.J. (1952). *Developmental tasks and education*. New York: David McKay.
- Herr, E. L. (1997). *Career counseling: a process in process*. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 25, 81-94.
- Hess, L.E., Petersen, A.C., & Mortimer, J.T. (1994). *Youth, employment and marginality: The problem and the solution*. In Petersen, A.C. & Mortimer, J.T. (Eds.), *Youth unemployment and society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kidd, J.M., Killeen, J., Jarvis, J. & Offer, M. (1994). *Is guidance an applied science?: the role of theory in the careers guidance interview*. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 22(3), 385-403.
- King, Z. (2001). *Career self-management: A framework for guidance of employed adults*, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*. Vol 29 No. 1,
- Kraus, L.J.& Hughey, K.F. (1999). *The impact of an intervention on career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecision*. *Professional School Counseling*, 2(5), 384-401.
- Krumboltz, J.D. (1998a). *Debate: Counsellor actions needed for the new career perspective*. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 26(4), 559-565

- Krumboltz, J. D. (1998b). When serendipity is not serendipitous. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(4), 390-393.
- Krumboltz, J.D. & Worthington, R.L. (1999). The school-to-work transition from a learning theory perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 312-325.
- Ladany, N., Melincoff, D.S., Constantine, M.G. & Love, R. (1997). At-risk urban high school students' commitment to career choices. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 76 (1), 45-53.
- Levine, G. K. (2000). Starting from scratch. *PSA Journal*, 66(10), 20-22.
- Levinson, D. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Ballantine.
- Loughead, T.A., Liu, S. H., & Middleton, E. B. (1995). Career development for at-risk youth: A program evaluation. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 43, 274-284.
- McWhirter, J.J. & McWhirter, B.T. (1995). Youth at risk: Another point of view. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 73,(5), 567-570.
- Meeus, W., Dekovic, M., & Ledema, J. (1997). Unemployment and identity in adolescence: A social comparison perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 369-380.
- Mitchell, K.E., Levin, A.S., & Krumboltz, J.D. (1999). Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77(2), 115-125.
- Newman, K.S. (1996). Working poor: Low wage employment in the lives of Harlem youths. In Graber, J.A., Brooks-Gunn, J., and Petersen, A.C. (Eds.). *Transition Through Adolescence: Interpersonal Domains and Context* (pp.323-343). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Peavy V. R. (1996). Constructivist career counselling and assessment. *Guidance & Counseling*, 11(3), 8-15.
- Reitzele, M., Vondracek, F.W., & Silbereisen, R.K. (1998). Timing of school-to-work transitions: A developmental-contextual perspective. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 22, 7-28.
- Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-Centered Therapy, Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Savickas, M.L. (1993). Career counseling in the postmodern era. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 7 (3), 205-215.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1984). *Counseling adults in transition*. New York: Springer
- Schlossberg, N. K. & Robinson, S. P. (1996) *Going to plan B*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Smith, S. D. (1998). Dress for success: Are you compromising your credibility? *Professional Safety*, 43(2), 34-36.
- Stasny, E. A. (2001). How to get a job in academics. *American Statistician*, 55(1), 35-41.
- Super, D. E. (1963). *Career development. Essays in vocational development*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Tiggemann, M., & Winefield, M. (1984). The effects of unemployment on the mood, self-esteem, locus of control, and depressive effect of school-leavers. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 57, 33-42.
- Villar, E., Juan, J., Corominas, E., & Capell, D. (2000). What kind of networking strategy advice should career counsellors offer university graduates searching for a job? *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 28(3), 389-310.
- Waterman, R.H., Jr., Waterman, J.A., & Collard, B.A. (1994). Toward a career-resilient workforce. *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 87-95.
- Watts, A. G.& Kidd, J.M.(2000). Guidance in the United Kingdom: past, present, and future. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 28(4), 485-502.
- Wilden, S. & La Gro, N. (1998). New frameworks for careers guidance: Developing a conceptual model of in the interview. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 26, 175-194.