

The Professionalization of Academic Advising: Where Are We in 2010?

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In the last year, three respected leaders in academic advising, Wes Habley, Terry Kuhn, and Gary Padak, published articles suggesting that academic advising has not met the standards of scholarship to be considered a field of inquiry, an academic discipline, or a profession. In this article, we examine academic advising history from the perspective of the discipline of sociology, through which scholars systematically study the processes whereby activities are transformed from occupations into professions. Indeed, we agree that academic advising has not met the typical sociological standards that accompany societal recognition for a profession, and we suggest that strengthened advisor education and credentialing are the steps necessary to secure public recognition of academic advising as a profession.

KEY WORDS: advising curriculum, advising profession, advising theory, history of advising, NACADA, professional development

The 30th anniversary of the chartering of NACADA has become an occasion for taking stock in the growth of academic advising (Nutt & Self, 2009). This retrospective is completely appropriate because academic advising enjoys a simultaneous long past and short history! Since the founding of the first colleges on the North American continent in the 17th century, college administrators and faculty members have recognized that students needed guidance on personal, moral, and intellectual matters beyond the scope of their classroom studies (Cook, 2009; Frost, 2000; Thelin & Hirschy, 2009). Over time, stakeholders transformed this informal acknowledgment of the needs of the whole student into more formal on-campus divisions of responsibility and expertise. Cook (2009) noted two landmark developments in the 19th century: the first use of the term *advisor* at Kenyon College in 1841 to refer to someone entrusted to offer students counseling in academic, social, or personal matters, and the first use of advisors in conjunction with the group system of advising at The Johns Hopkins University in the 1870s and 1880s to give students direction in selecting elective course work. In the 20th century,

formalization was coupled with creative systems of divisions of labor and expertise as the student personnel movement gained momentum and the more inclusive advising practices became differentiated into the familiar divisions of academic advising, vocational guidance, and personal—or psychological—counseling (Cook, 2009). After World War II, the GI Bill gave impetus to a proliferation of newer services to accommodate the returning veterans, and the resultant complexity of delivery models led to a period of self-conscious study and rethinking of academic advising (Cook, 2009; Scott & Lindley, 1946).

After nearly 3 decades of expansion and reevaluation, the first national conference on academic advising commenced in Burlington, Vermont in 1977, which led directly to the chartering of the National Academic Advising Association in 1979. Academic advisors who banded together to form NACADA clearly thought of themselves, from the beginning, as professionals, and they referred to academic advising as a profession (Grites & Gordon, 2009). In their apt description of “an amazing journey,” Grites and Gordon (2009) summarized the progress made by NACADA on behalf of academic advisors in the past 30 years.

While all of the previous activity advanced the cause of academic advising tremendously, three respected leaders published articles within the past year questioning the status of academic advising. Former NACADA President and charter member, Wes Habley, and former *NACADA Journal* Co-Editors, Terry Kuhn and Gary Padak, stated that academic advising fails to meet the standards of scholarship to be considered a field of inquiry, an academic discipline, or a profession. Habley (2009, p. 76) focused on academic advising as “a field of inquiry,” while Kuhn and Padak (2008) questioned whether or not academic advising could be considered “a discipline.” They framed their comments in a way that is consistent with advisors’ long-standing self-definition of their work as a profession (Beatty, 1991). Cook (2009), however, observed that the professionalization process of academic advising did not begin until the chartering of NACADA, and we agree. In Gordon and Habley’s (2000) seminal handbook on advising,

Kerr noted that academic advising had not yet met the educational and legal criteria for a profession, and he suggested that advising should be seen as “dynamic and professionalizing” rather than as “static and fully professionalized” (Kerr, 2000, p. 350). Again, we agree. Therefore, in this essay, we build on Cook’s and Kerr’s insights by examining the history of academic advising (and the history of NACADA as well) through the lens of the discipline of sociology. Following the lead of sociological theorists who have studied the development of work and occupations into professions in both industrial and postindustrial economies, we frame the issues that Habley (2009) and Kuhn and Padak (2008) raised about the state of academic advising.

Along with economists, sociologists have been among the principal investigators to study the history of occupations and their transformations over time within the larger trends of changing economies. In this article, we review the sociological literature on the historical process of professionalization and use it as a framework for a fresh analysis of the current status of academic advising. We compare academic advising to other occupations that have been recognized as professions in the 20th century and ask how academic advising compares to the status of, for example, physical therapy, nursing, social work, and school counseling.

Stated simply, the question for NACADA members in 2010 is “Where are we in the process of becoming recognized as a profession?” However, rather than simply comparing the progress made by academic advisors in seeking recognition as a profession to the progress made by those seeking like status in other occupations, we also make concrete recommendations about the work needed by academic advisors to attain recognition of their field as one of the professions. The accompanying practical question we ask is “What should we do now and in the future to reach the status of a profession?”

We begin by issuing a clear disclaimer. By asking questions about the professionalization of academic advising as an activity and an occupation, we do not in any way question the dedication and professionalism of NACADA or its members. Our goal, in conjunction with the concerns expressed by Habley (2008) and Kuhn and Padak (2009a), is to clarify the efforts that NACADA and its members can take to gain societal recognition of academic advising as a profession.

The Nature of Professions

Not all sociologists subscribe to a single defi-

nition of a profession; however, they have developed a broad consensus concerning the defining characteristics of occupations generally accepted as professions. For our purposes, we will define a profession as a white-collar occupation that confers on workers a relatively high level of prestige and that requires extensive formal education as a condition of entry-level employment. Our inclusion of the label *white-collar* is, we believe, self-explanatory. The term *prestigious* characterizes one of the most salient reasons a group seeks recognition as a profession: Prestige not only confers status on the members of that occupation, but it also brings attendant benefits, including the authority of an occupation to regulate its own business (Goode, 1957, 1960). We included the clause “requires extensive formal education” because the most obvious qualification expected of the members of any profession is “a prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge” (Goode, 1960, p. 903). Both prestige and specialized education will be important in our analysis of the current standing of academic advising on the path to professionalization.

The colloquial usage of the word *professional* suggests that a person who earns a living from any particular occupation might be considered to “have a profession.” This usage contrasts the term *professional* with the term *amateur* and distinguishes between a person’s motives for doing any activity: That is, a professional undertakes an activity to earn a living while an amateur partakes for the intrinsic enjoyment of it (Macionis, 2010). While this usage would distinguish an amateur golfer from a professional golfer, it does not capture the meaning of *member of a profession* as is meant by sociologists. Speaking in the colloquial, one uses the term *professional* essentially to recognize that a former mere activity (i.e., one of the bundle of tasks one does at work) is now demanded to a level sufficient to become an occupation. However, the criterion of making a living does not distinguish, for example, between a trade and a profession. The common expression *professional academic advisor* cannot be taken as an indication that academic advising constitutes a profession. The semantic details of daily usage can be misleading. More important, because academia has long been considered a profession, the unbundling of academic advising tasks from the set of faculty activities and the assignment of academic advising to individuals who do not belong to the college or university faculty has led to the expression *professional academic advisor*.

Because college and university faculty members are considered members of a profession (Goode, 1960; Hughes, 1963), have in the past and continue in the present to participate in academic advising, and in fact, do the majority of the academic advising (Allen & Smith, 2008)—should academic advising done by anyone in a college or university setting be considered professional activity? Probably not. Professional academic advisors, through the chartering of NACADA as their professional organization, clearly seek recognition of advising as an independent profession, and some professions, such as medicine, have given birth to new occupations, such as nursing, whose practitioners have sought recognition for their fields as emerging professions themselves. Most sociologists agree with Hughes (1963) that simply debating whether or not any particular occupation qualifies as a profession categorically is an unproductive exercise. Sociologists consider the concept of a profession as an ideal type (Goode, 1947; Hughes, 1963), useful for the process of comparing one occupation with another and for building measures for the progress of the professionalization process. Therefore, we turn to describing the process of professionalization as a means of assessing where academic advising stands along the path toward becoming recognized as a profession.

We must address one additional semantic issue regarding discussions of academic advising as a profession. The law has its own linguistic conventions, and the law designates educational institutions as belonging to a different category than other professions, especially in tax law. NACADA is chartered as a 501c3 nonprofit educational association, rather than a professional association, for tax purposes. When we refer to academic advising, in general, as a profession—and especially when we refer to NACADA as a professional organization—we are following sociological usage rather than legal categories for the purposes of our analysis. Nothing in our presentation should be construed as a suggestion that NACADA or its individual members are acting in violation of the provisions of that charter. We are indebted to Marsha Miller (personal communication, January 16, 2010) for pointing out to us the importance of clarifying this issue in our presentation.

The Process of Professionalization

Stages of Professionalization

The term *professionalization* refers to the process by which a nonprofessional occupation is transformed into a vocation with the attributes of

a profession (Foote, 1953). Professions are very diverse, and the history of each profession is unique (Abbott, 1988). Therefore, any attempt to identify a common pattern of professionalization that underlies all of the available cases requires caution. Abbott (1988), one of the most influential sociological theorists of professions, believes that historical case studies of individual professions can present a misleading picture of the process of professionalization because professions rarely develop in isolation. Rather, professions emerge by differentiation from other occupations when members with comparable skills compete with those in the emerging profession for legitimate authority, or jurisdiction, over their areas of expertise.

As a result, Abbott (1988) argued for a *systems* of professions to classify the process of professionalization as an ongoing division of expert labor. Abbott explained that groups assert jurisdiction over a particular clientele based on claims of a growing body of special knowledge for diagnosing client needs and for acquiring the unique skills for treating those needs. Abbott's description is certainly true for academic advising, which has emerged as an identified specialty in higher education through a process of differentiation of the advising jurisdiction from that of related counselor specialties, such as vocational guidance as well as personal, psychological, and career counseling (Cook, 2009; Hughey & Hughey, 2009).

Nonetheless, some discernable, broad, historical patterns are useful for assessing the progress of the professionalization of academic advising. For example, Wilensky (1964) offered a stage theory useful for tracing the typical trajectory of professionalization from a chronological point of view (see also Hall, 1968). After reviewing the history of 18 occupations that have been consensually acknowledged as professions, Wilensky observed the following four chronological stages: a) the creation of a full-time occupation; b) the establishment of schools for training new recruits; c) the formation of one or more professional associations; and d) the establishment of a code of ethics for members to follow.

Stage One: Creating Occupations

Wilensky's (1964) stage one is a logical necessity usually involving either the creation of new market demand for new services or the marked increase in market demand for an existing service so that practitioners can make a living pursuing that one activity to the exclusion of others. In other words, all professions begin as occupations.

Why do some occupations transform into professions? The extensive set of case studies of professions accumulated by sociologists can be roughly divided into four different trajectories of professionalization based both on the historical period in which the particular professions originated and the nature of the demands for services that initiated the transformation of each particular occupation into a profession.

Because usage of the term *profession* dates back to the beginnings of the university in Europe and the education of physicians, lawyers, and the clergy, the first trajectory of professionalization was defined by the identification of a body of esoteric knowledge that justified the practice in each profession. The education in all three professions was catechetical in spirit. The medical curriculum was grounded in reading of the classical texts written by Hippocrates, Theophrastus, and Galen; in the scholastic mind-set, good practice was defined as following the prescriptions of these canonical texts. Therefore, commentators who analyze professions with the mind-set that law, medicine, and clergy are ideal types tend to define professions in terms of practice grounded in an esoteric body of knowledge (Abbott, 1988; Lewis & Ryan, 1976). However, we do not find this very useful for analysis of contemporary cases because even the original three professions no longer fit the ideal type. Before scientific medicine and the catechetical character of medical education were replaced in Europe and subsequently in the United States, university-based medical education did not exist. Even after the advent of scientific medicine, the recent movement for evidence-based medicine (EBM) was born out of a realization that many good practices have never been empirically verified as effective!

The major professions that emerged during the 19th century tended to follow a second trajectory in which professionals were practitioners trained in a specialized technique supported by a body of theoretical knowledge (Foote, 1953). Commentators using the history of these professions as a background tend to identify professional practice with a body of theoretical knowledge (Macionis, 2010). Goode (1960, p. 906) suggested that “rule-of-thumb experience” with a “body of codified knowledge” characterizes the development of fields such as architecture and accountancy. This second trajectory differed from the first because the original three occupations were always seen as professions while these new occupations were transformed into professions by a growing appreciation of their effectiveness and the expertise needed to

undertake them. We argue that the trajectory fits the case of the professionalization of the traditional academic disciplines better than either the first or third trajectories, which are based on learned societies and market demand.

The third trajectory was associated with the rise of the institution of science in industrializing nations. It started with emerging learned societies or academic, scientific disciplines that later responded to market demands for knowledge and expertise, thereby creating new services that eager clients readily recognized as professional. Examples of this trajectory include the evolution of chemistry as a scientific field, which gave rise to applications of basic research in the form of chemical engineering in the 19th century, and the invention of the computer and the myriad applications of computer hardware and software engineering in the 20th century. With members staying independent from guild motivations and serving their clients’ needs directly as consultants in private practice, the professions evolving from the third trajectory have a commonality with those arising out of the first trajectory. Because the empirically established body is a desirable quality on which practice is based, many would consider the third trajectory as the appropriate professionalization model for academic advisors. We disagree.

The fourth trajectory also appeared in the industrializing nations, but differs from the first three. Fourth-trajectory professions evolved from attempts to solve recognized problems created by the fabric of social change. Examples include the emergence of social workers, who help people cope with the rapidly changing sociopolitical landscape of industrial society, and the emergence of actuaries, who are hired by insurance companies that underwrite the risks of modern life through policies as a means of dealing with death, injury, illness, theft, fire, and unemployment (Hughes, 1963).

Like the second trajectory, this final pathway to professionalization offers lessons to learn in thinking about academic advising. In many ways the history of academic advising reflects emerging problems created by the changing nature of higher education, the society that it serves, the diversity of students who have matriculated in postsecondary institutions, and the unique professional services developed to help students be successful.

Whatever trajectory an emerging profession followed during stage one, Wilensky (1964) found that each successful profession satisfied two criteria:

1. The work of the professional is technical,

requiring systematic education or training in the body of knowledge defining professional practice over a prolonged period of time.

2. The work of the professional is guided by professional norms that place the welfare of the client above the interests of either the individual practitioner or the profession itself.

This second criterion eventually leads to a recognition that the professionals' norms should be expressed in terms of a code of ethics and practice, but this typically occurs later in the process of professionalization (stage four). The first criterion typically leads directly to the founding of schools for training new professionals, which constitutes stage two of the process of professionalization.

Stage Two: Establishing Schools

Wilensky (1964) observed a second stage in the long-term professions he studied: the establishment of schools for training new recruits. He noted that the body of systematic knowledge and the specialized techniques underlying each profession constituted transferable skills, and the need for training more professionals typically led to the founding of one or more new training sites usually associated with colleges or universities. The curriculum established for educating new professionals could be described as "technical" whether the content of the curriculum could be considered scientific (as in the case of emerging medical specialties, such as psychiatry) or classical (as in the case of business models, such as accounting). Most important, the technical character of the education meant that completing a course of professional education conferred on students an exclusive claim to competence: No one can legitimately claim to practice in any profession unless he or she has undergone such training. He noted that "there is no notion that it [the technical skills] can all be learned on the job" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 138).

Stage Three: Forming Associations

Once new professionals began to flow from the training schools, Wilensky (1964) observed the formation of professional associations. The reasons to form these associations included a desire to clarify professional activities and standards for competent practice, to rid the field of incompetent claimants to professional practice, to lobby for formal legal recognition and protection of legitimate practitioners by securing licensure laws and protection of their jurisdiction from encroachment by competing

occupations, and to promote the general welfare of the profession (Abbott, 1988; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1968; Hughes, 1963; Wilensky, 1964). The establishment of professional associations guarantees that the future of professionalization in each occupation is carried out as self-conscious, planned action.

Stage Four: Ratifying Codes

Finally, Wilensky (1964) found that the existence of the professional association typically led rather quickly to the writing and ratification of a code of ethics. These codes usually defined professional obligations toward clients and colleagues and served as the basis for the self-regulation of members that is one of the hallmarks of professional practice (Abbott, 1988; Goode, 1960; Hall, 1968; Hughes, 1963; Wilensky, 1964). Because professionals typically seek to play a major role in writing any legislation that regulates their practice, through associations they hope to secure the support of the law in seeking to regulate the affairs of their own professions (Abbott, 1988). With the writing of a code of ethics comes a conscious articulation of the norms of professionalism expected from practitioners in their attitudes as well as their actions (Hall, 1968): Members adopt the professional association as their major reference group and they cultivate a conscious sense of dedication and calling to the profession (Hall, 1968; Wilensky, 1964). With the completion of this fourth stage, the transformation of an occupation into a profession is usually complete.

The Professionalization of Academic Advising in 2010

The brief chronology of the history of academic advising offered by Cook (2009) shows the emergence and convenient milestones that mark the start of each of Wilensky's (1964) stages of professionalization for academic advising. Stage one, the establishment of academic advising as a full-time occupation, was clearly recognizable at the beginning of the great expansion of higher education following World War II. Cook (2009, pp. 29–30) stated, "The continuing expansion of the curriculum, along with the increasing specialization of faculty work, created a need that would ultimately be filled by professional academic advisors." She also noted that an identifiable population of professional advisors was emerging by 1979. One rough indicator of the growth of professional academic advising is the exponential growth of the membership of NACADA over the past 30 years: There

were 429 charter members of the organization in 1979; membership rose to 2,157 in 1989; it continued to rise to 5,318 in 1999 and had risen to nearly 11,000 by 2009 (Barnes, Kuhn, & Grites, 2009; Habley, 2009). Thus, professional academic advising has been clearly established as an occupation for more than the 30 years of NACADA's existence.

Chronologically, the next stage of Wilensky's (1964) typology is stage three, the formation of one or more professional associations, which for advising culminated with the chartering of NACADA in 1979 (Barnes et al., 2009). Shortly after coming into existence, NACADA began to support the new occupation of professional advisors by inaugurating placement activities in 1982 and bringing a more formal resume bank and placement service to members and prospective employers by 1986 (Beatty, 1991). NACADA clearly provides the kinds of support that characterize Wilensky's third stage of professionalization.

Stage four, the establishment of a code of ethics for members, followed. Subsequent to member interest first expressed in 1991, the NACADA Statement of Core Values was formally adopted in 1994 (Frank, 2000), with a revised document posted on the NACADA Web site in 2005 (Frank, 2005). The Statement of Core Values, along with the Council for the Advancement of Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising (Gordon & Habley, 2000, pp. 417–24), have both served to give NACADA members and other professional academic advisors ethical guidance (Frank, 2000).

Finally, NACADA addressed the second Wilensky (1964) stage of providing formal professional education and training through establishing schools and appropriate credentials. A certificate program in academic advising was initiated as a collaboration between NACADA and Kansas State University in 2003 (Cook, 2009), and more recently, a graduate program leading to a master of science degree in academic advising was undertaken by NACADA and Kansas State University in 2008 (Cook, 2009). Because of the chartering of NACADA as a 501c3 nonprofit educational association, it is important to clarify that NACADA neither cosponsors nor certifies either the certificate program or the master's degree program offered by Kansas State University (M. Miller, personal communication, January 16, 2010). By the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the occupation of academic advising evidenced all four stages of Wilensky's typology of professionalization to one degree or another.

The most obvious variance from the typical pat-

tern of professionalization described by Wilensky (1964) regards the relationship between the chartering of NACADA as the professional association for academic advisors before the appearance of formal educational programs for training professional academic advisors. Clearly, when a profession is characterized as practice based on a body of theoretical knowledge, it makes logical sense that developing a knowledge base and establishing educational programs to deliver the transferable skills that the knowledge base makes possible should precede the development of a professional organization. This helps explain why Kuhn and Padak (2008) and Habley (2009) concluded that academic advising could not yet be considered an academic discipline.

Wilensky (1964) observed that the chronological sequence of development (such as that followed by academic advising) is not unprecedented; however, he also noted that when professionalization outpaces disciplinary maturity, the results have not been encouraging.

It should be noted . . . [that] university training schools appear on the scene before national professional associations do. In the less-established professions, the reverse pattern is typical. This underscores the importance of the cultivation of a knowledge base and the strategic innovative role of universities and the early teachers in linking knowledge to practice and creating a rationale for exclusive jurisdiction. Where professionalization has gone farthest, the occupational association does not typically set up a training school; the schools usually promote an effective professional association. (Wilensky, 1964, p. 144)

Wilensky's observation should not be taken to suggest that NACADA be dissolved in order for professionalization to go forward! Sociologists do not generally believe that all professions follow a common natural history, and they also do not believe that deviating from Wilensky's pathways is somehow abnormal. However, Wilensky's characterization suggests that NACADA members should feel a sense of urgency in addressing the evident weak link between practice and the underlying knowledge base of academic advising.

Academic advising is, sociologically speaking, still an emerging profession in 2010. The obvious missing qualification is the failure, until the very recent past, to establish an educational program for training academic advisors and to require it for admission into the profession.

Where Does Advising Need to Go?

We began this article by noting that Habley (2009) and Kuhn and Padak (2008) had called into question the scholarly basis for academic advising to be considered a profession. Habley's closing summation of his own view of the matter is as follows:

In reality and in spite of NACADA's efforts, the overall scholarship has advanced little since 1979 when Grites intoned, "Research studies must be designed to determine the relative worth and adaptability of academic practices." . . . However, to date, a unique and credible body of knowledge is nonexistent, evidence supporting the impact of advising is insufficient, and a coherent and widely delivered curriculum for advising is currently unavailable. I contend that without this basic framework, the case for the importance of academic advising can be neither built nor sustained. . . . Without the implementation of a plan to substantiate the claim that it makes a difference in the lives of students and thereby enhances institutional effectiveness, advising will certainly remain a peripheral and clerical activity on many campuses. (Habley, 2009, pp. 82–83)

We agree with Habley's take on the gravity of the situation. Undoubtedly, if such a body of evidence were to come into existence in the next few years, it would be a crucial component of the curriculum of any master's level degree program in academic advising. However, we should point out that such a body of evidence, would not, by itself, constitute a sufficient basis for academic advising to claim the status of a profession. The reasons for this assertion are twofold: First, the absence of evidence for efficacy has not prevented many other emerging professions from achieving recognition as professions, and second, such research findings would speak to the efficacy of advising practice but not to its content.

Questions concerning the efficacy of standards of practice currently exist for many of the emerging professions of the 20th century, and even the original three professions are not immune from such inquiry. For example, in EBM within scientific medicine, lay conceptions of good quality medical practice are based on assumptions that physicians make diagnoses and prescribe courses of treatment on the basis of sound scientific evidence; in simple terms, physicians take stock of effective treatments and base their treatments on such assessments.

However, after repeated studies documented great variability in the quality of patient care, proponents of EBM proposed standardization to medical diagnosis and treatment through "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients" (Timmermans & Mauck, 2005, p. 18).

Lay persons would be surprised to discover that the content of medical textbooks and published review articles are better characterized as the authors' personal expert opinion than as verified knowledge (Woolf, 1995). Physicians' rules-of-thumb (called *guidelines* and *protocols*) prescribe treatments that are "likely" to work in "typical" cases (Dans, 1994), and the language used to express these guidelines are often purposefully vague or equivocal to avoid overstating the certainty of the treatment outcomes (Shaffer & Shaffer, 2007). The emerging EBM paradigm in medicine has given rise to a broad-based call for evidence-based practice in related fields. Many professions, including nursing (Armola, Bourgault, Halm, Buard, Bucher et al., 2009), social work (Briggs & McBeath, 2009), optometry (Cavallano, 2009), psychotherapy (Hays, 2009), school counseling (Kaffenberger & Davis, 2009), and physical therapy (Schreiber, Stern, Marchetti, & Provident, 2009), are all currently calling attention to the need for practitioner research to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services.

Academic advisors are not alone in being unable to satisfactorily demonstrate the efficacy of their efforts through a sufficient body of practitioner research; however, the failure to document effective practice has not barred other occupations from being recognized as professions. We do not suggest that the research that Habley (2008), Kuhn and Padak (2009a), Grites and Gordon (2009), and other leaders have called critical is neither important nor desirable. We are not calling for professional academic advisors to be excused from assessing their practices. We are simply making the point that, sociologically, such a body of evidence is not as central to the social recognition of academic advising as a profession as is the absence of a cadre of advisors with a master's level education in an appropriate body of theoretical knowledge to support the practice of developmental academic advising. If sociologists were forced to name one criterion that separates the professions from the trades and other blue-collar occupations, that criterion would be the requirement of a relevant, prerequisite education, most often a graduate-level education (Abbott, 1988;

Goode, 1960; Hall, 1968; Hughes, 1963; Macionis, 2010; Wilensky, 1964).

Second, we believe that it is important to recognize that the body of empirical research assessing the effectiveness of the practice of academic advising would not exhaust the conceptual requirements of the knowledge base for a profession of academic advising because it would not address the theoretical needs of developmental academic advising. At the time of the writing of this article there was only one master's level program for the education of professional academic advisors in the United States: the program at Kansas State University. As that program has evolved, it currently contains five courses whose major focus is on academic advising knowledge and practice. But whatever the content of a single graduate program, its content cannot be seen to create a curriculum with the imprimatur of the entire profession. It would be no exaggeration to state that there can be no credible basis for expanding the number of degree-granting programs without the clear establishment of a professional curriculum to study. Sociologically, the lesson for advising is that it will be seen as professional if we can define the body of knowledge and practice that advisors endorse and follow. We see this state of affairs as being at least as critical for the recognition of academic advising as a profession as is the accumulation of empirical research supporting the effectiveness of the practice of academic advising.

What should be the focus of this new curriculum? In a word, theory! When we looked for a description of the educational content of a profession, we found that professional knowledge has been variously described as esoteric (Hughes, 1963), abstract (Goode, 1960), theoretical (Foote, 1953), technical (Wilensky, 1964) and systematic (Wilensky, 1964). An author's choice of term reflects the particular professions being described, but the common concept within each author's analysis includes a description of professional knowledge as principled knowledge that must be applied to any given situation by exercise of experience and judgment rather than by rote. Therefore, we argue that academic advisors need to develop a body of theory from which to educate future advisors, and that this need for a coherent, nuanced theory is every bit as critical to the future of the profession as is the need for empirical research into the effectiveness of academic advising practice.

In some ways, the best way to clarify the accepted nature of professional knowledge is to contrast it with information needed by the paraprofessional (Abbott, 1993). Macionis (2010) noted

that some workers in the trades and occupations, such as medical technicians and paralegals, possess specialized technical skills that require some level of training, but do not require the formal, theoretical education expected of professionals. Paraprofessional roles exist with, and are contrasted by, professional roles, and in fact, support the professional role in some familiar terms. Professionals are educated over time in their field until they are considered experts; paraprofessionals are trained, in limited sessions (often on-the-job), to perform limited roles (Wilensky, 1964).

Professional practice is often called *art* while paraprofessional practice is called a *science* (Goode, 1960). In this parlance, art is the colloquial term for tacit knowledge, while science is the colloquial term for explicit knowledge—most often recipe knowledge (Abbott, 1988; Shaffer, 1981). Paraprofessional knowledge is rote memorized knowledge (Abbott, 1988), often in the form of step-by-step directions to follow. Paraprofessionals are technicians. They master techniques and follow them exactly, receive explicit directions concerning the services to perform, and enjoy little latitude for judgment in terms of their directed activities or for improvisation concerning the techniques to follow. Because of these differences, the socialization of paraprofessionals is commonly called *training* while the term *education* is reserved for the preparation of professionals (Abbott, 1988).

Student peers and paraprofessionals have been deployed to handle some academic advising tasks, especially simple services related to scheduling of students' course work or completing of degree-requirement checklists (Farren & Vowell, 2000; Reinartz, 2000; Teitelbaum, 2000; Winston & Ender, 1988). The use of student peers and paraprofessionals has been touted as efficient and economical because of the relatively brief course of training that allows the trainees to perform a circumscribed role (Reinartz, 2000). As a result, many faculty members and administrators have the impression that academic advising can be learned easily through on-the-job training.

Even when individual institutions invested resources in developing academic advising centers and sought to staff entry levels with master's degree candidates, the preparation for advising was often cobbled together on site and administered as on-the-job training (Danis & Wall, 1987, 1988/2009). However, because no occupation that sociologists classify as a profession can be learned on the job (Goode, 1960) the institutional memory of such practices can undermine claims for aca-

ademic advising as a profession. Unless the current educational demands and standards for advisors can be clearly differentiated from such programs, the image of advisors as paraprofessionals will remain indelible. Hence, we believe that the call for academic advisors to have master's degrees for initial appointments issued by NACADA Presidents (Padak & Kuhn, 2009) is a crucial next step in the process of the professionalization of academic advising.

The focus of this enriched curriculum for educating academic advisors should be a growing body of theoretical knowledge. We do not necessarily believe that a unified theory of academic theory is the ultimate goal of such research; Hagen and Jordan (2008) as well as Robbins (2010) have cogently argued that the development of a unified theory is both unlikely and, following the example of other professions, unnecessary. As Creamer (2000) and McGillin (2000) observed, much of the theory behind developmental academic advising represents applications from other academic disciplines including psychology, sociology, education, counseling, and psychotherapy. This borrowing of ideas is fully consistent with other professions: the knowledge base for clinical nursing practice, for example, comes in part from biology, chemistry, and scientific medicine (Goode, 1960; Hallet, 2007; Hughes, 1963). For that reason, we argue that the immediate need for theory in academic advising could, and should, be met in part by recruiting subject matter experts (SMEs) from cognate disciplines. Following the usage established by Boyer (1994), the knowledge base of the profession of academic advising should include the scholarship of integration (making connections across the disciplines to the practice of academic advising), application (making academic advising a means to help students be successful and help institutions to meet their obligations to retain and graduate their students), and discovery (original basic and applied research). Just as the knowledge base for educating registered nurses is created by SMEs in cognate fields such as physicians, biologists, nutritionists, epidemiologists, psychologists, the knowledge base for theory in academic advising should include SMEs from other academic disciplines including psychology, sociology, education, counseling, and psychotherapy.

However, with the establishment of an appropriate, interdisciplinary knowledge base, advisors should increasingly be engaged in the scholarship of discovery (Habley, 2009; McGillin, 2000). Creamer (2000, p. 31) expressed it best:

Although no theories of academic advising are currently available, the need for such theories is increasingly evident. Professionals currently engaged in the process of using related theories in practice are in the best position to observe and conduct systematic research on the advising process in higher education. They should become builders of theories that can explain the complex phenomena associated with effective practice.

The curriculum should include courses in qualitative and quantitative research methods and the appropriate tools of data analysis so that master's level education will produce academic advisors who can fulfill the profession's need for research and assessment. For example, Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, and Troxel (see pp. 4–13) argued that three methodological paradigms (action inquiry, grounded theory, and program evaluation) are especially appropriate means for practitioners to frame and conduct valuable, original, empirical research concerning academic advising. The inclusion of such topics as action inquiry, grounded theory, and program evaluation will serve both advisors who choose to conduct research and those who wish to embody the traditional meaning of a professional as an educated practitioner by incorporating the entire knowledge base of the field into her or his practice. Studying research methods as well as reading and understanding professional literature are reciprocal skill sets. As Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008) have recently argued, academic advisors must be educated to be *scholar-practitioners*.

Conclusion

On the basis of his own review of the process of professionalization, Habley (2009, p. 79) noted:

The terms *discipline* and *profession* both are characterized by specialized knowledge and often long and intensive preparation, including instruction in skills and methods as well as the scientific, historical, or scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods. Several definitions of profession suggest that such knowledge and intensive preparation is acknowledged only when an individual completes a terminal degree in a field of study.

The importance of a terminal degree for educating academic advisors as professionals has been emphasized by other experts as well. Padak and Kuhn (2009, pp. 64–66), in an article summarizing a series of interviews held with all of the past

presidents of NACADA, reported the responses to the question “What must NACADA do to assure recognition of academic advisors as professionals in higher education?” They summarized the consensus of the answers in a series of seven bullet points that are consistent with a sociological account of professions. The responses included, among other specifics, maintaining the activities of NACADA as the professional association to publicize the contributions of quality academic advising to the university and college community and to their stakeholders, encouraging advisors to regulate themselves by assessing the impact of advising and evaluating individual advisors’ performance, and providing developmental training for advisors. The responses were also consistent with the calls issued by Habley (2009) and Kuhn and Padak (2009b) for research both to support the body of knowledge upon which academic advising practice is based and to document the impact of academic advising on institutional retention and graduation as well as student success.

We focus on the one recommendation that embodies Habley’s observation about the conditions of recognition of a profession: academic advisors need to have master’s degrees for initial appointment (Padak & Kuhn, 2009, p. 64). From a sociological point of view, the biggest need for the future of an emerging field is the establishment of curriculum content for training. Academic advisors need to acquire the type of education that will legitimize their claim to recognition of advising as a profession. We want to be clear that, from a sociological point of view, we refer to the issue of recognition of academic advising as a legitimate profession by other constituencies within the academy and by stakeholders outside the university itself. Proliferating certificate programs and graduate degree programs will not guarantee such recognition. Many in other occupations have sought to have their fields perceived as professions, and many blue-collar service industries, and even trade groups, have availed themselves of the trappings of the professions as if they were part of a formula to secure professional status in the community. Macionis (2010, p. 423) commented:

Many occupations that do not qualify as true professions nonetheless seek to *professionalize* their services. Claiming professional standing often begins by renaming the work to suggest special, theoretical knowledge, moving the field from its original, lesser reputation. . . . Interested parties may also form a professional

association that certifies their skills. This organization then licenses its members, writes a code of ethics, and emphasizes the work’s importance in the community. To win public acceptance, a professional association may also establish schools or other training facilities and perhaps start a professional journal.

Macionis mentioned that one common tactic of this imitative professionalism is to euphemistically rename the occupation in a self-aggrandizing way; in this milieu, for example, exterminators become “pest control engineers.” Such efforts are often transparent and self-defeating. Although academic advising services were renamed when they were differentiated from student personnel services after World War II (Cook, 2009), we do not believe that the name is at issue for professional academic advisors. However, we mention this trend to appear professional, and the example of the naming issue in particular, simply to underscore that appearances are important, and actions taken by advisors with the self-conscious aim of furthering the professionalization of academic advising need to be seen as substantive and, therefore, legitimate (Abbott, 1988).

The former NACADA presidents’ recommendation that all advisors have master’s degrees as a condition for initial employment would meet the credentialing issue raised by our analysis of Wilensky’s (1964) stage three of professionalization. Because the programs have only been initiated in the last few years, the immediate need—and opportunity—includes a careful consideration, from a sociological point of view, of the content of such new programs.

We hope our review clearly elucidates the fact that the knowledge base supporting every acknowledged profession must be truly substantive. Such a knowledge base is important not only for the benefit of future students who will be the beneficiaries of better advising, but also for the sake of the reputation of academic advising as a legitimate profession.

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