
**BALANCING WORK AND
FAMILY ROLES:
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING
COLLEGE STUDENTS IN HOLISTIC
CAREER AND LIFE PLANNING**



Florida State University

Career Center

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Introduction of Literature

A central theme of the literature regarding work and family roles is the significant change in the nature of the workforce within the past few decades. Women have moved into the workforce in great numbers, resulting in an increased prevalence of dual-earner families. As this trend has impacted the nature of the roles within families, more emphasis has been placed on examining the intersection of work and family life, as well the balance between them (Goldberg et al, 2012).

Multiple definitions of work and family balance have been described, but the current definition frames this construct as "situational", which emphasizes the individuals' perceptions of work and family roles. According to Goldberg et al, (2012) work and family balance is an "individual defining balance and engagement, across roles, in a way that is meaningful to her or him" (p. 437). Addressing this topic is important because without considering the intersection of work and family roles, conflict between work and family is more likely to occur. In fact, research shows that when striving for balance in life, the relationship between work and family provides the greatest amount of strain, which can decrease job satisfaction (Evans, Carney & Wilkinson, 2013; Dynah & Casper 2012). This phenomenon supports the idea that emphasizing work and family life is an important component of the career development process.

Throughout the literature, research tends to focus on the experiences of women in the context of work and family roles and there is limited focus on men. However, in the restricted body of literature, results support the notion that men are impacted as well (Evans, Carney & Wilkinson, 2012). To address these potential issues for both men and women, one theme identified in the research is that it is beneficial to intervene prior to engaging in work and family roles. In fact, research has suggested there is a need to address planning and information gathering related to work and family roles. Planning ahead could be an important part of reducing conflict in the future and researchers suggest that early intervention is important in young adults, ages 18-21, with the aim to reduce potential work and family conflict (Peake & Harris, 2002; Dynah & Casper, 2012).

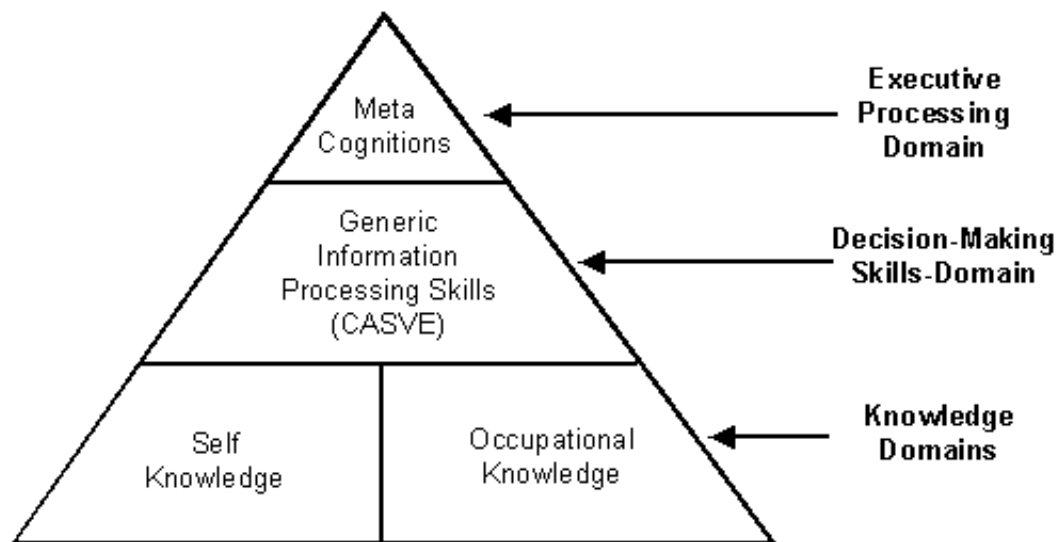
Considering these findings, increasing college students' awareness and providing this population with knowledge related to work and family roles could be instrumental in successfully navigating their career development process. Trends show that overall, college students can expect to engage in establishing careers, finding partners and navigating dual career situations, showing this is a factor of career development most will expect to encounter (Goldberg et al, 2012). Related to this idea, it is important to consider where college students gain preliminary information surrounding these roles. Examples include culture, parental modeling, and actual work experiences. For example, collectivist and individualistic cultures place different value on the support of family members according to gender roles, parents instill different values in their children, and lastly, it has been found that if college students engage in work, they will be more likely to be in favor of maternal employment, as they see the benefits of employment (Goldberg et al, 2012).

Although it has been identified that there is a relationship between work and family roles, there is not a wealth of information addressing the actual process of developing an awareness of these roles, particularly from the perspective of college students engaging in career development. In addition, there is a lack of research examining anticipated work and family conflict (Westring, 2011). For example, a college student may not have a significant other or be concerned about the expense of childcare, but that does not mean they should not have these potential situations on their radars. The potential lack of awareness and gaps in research have implications for career planning and practice.

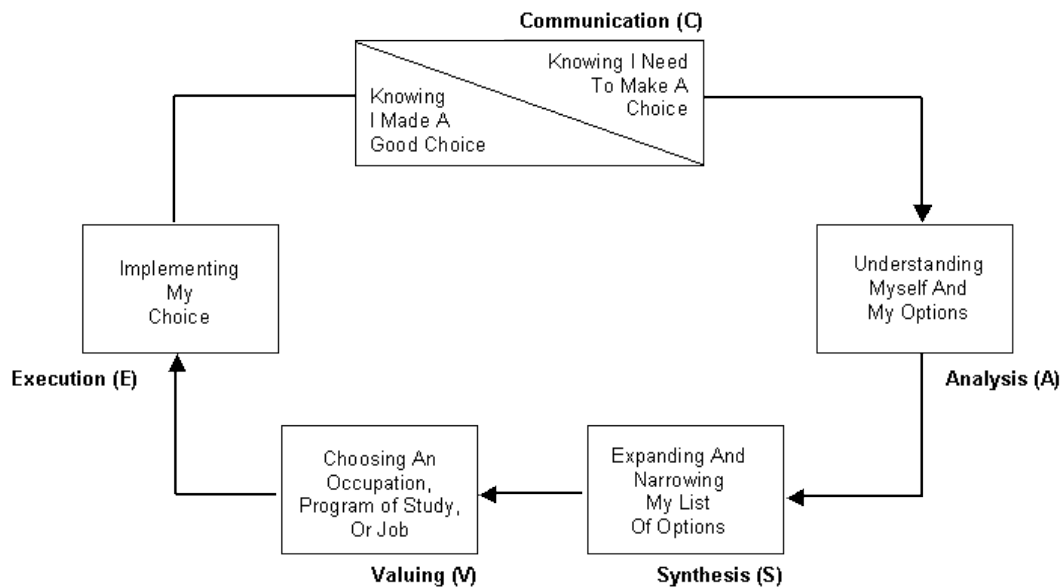
When approaching career development holistically, it is important to consider that career decisions do not occur in a vacuum, but multiple factors come into play (Ganginis Del Pino, O'Brien, Mereish, & Miller, 2013). Although many college students may be unsure of what their future holds in terms of family roles, planning ahead could play a crucial role in reducing work and family conflict in the future and navigating their life course.

References

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Breakdown of Cognitive Information Processing Theory

Metacognitions: Self-talk, self-awareness, monitoring and controlling of negative emotions and thinking

Decision Making Domain: CASVE Cycle, How do I make decisions?

Communication: What is my gap? Internal and/or external cues

Analysis: Enhance self-knowledge meaning values, interests, skills, and personal preferences; enhance options knowledge meaning educational programs of study, jobs, and career options.

Synthesis: Elaboration- research and identify potential jobs and alternatives of interest.
Crystallization- narrow down these choices into a manageable number, usually between 3-5 options.

Valuing: Value the costs and benefits of the choices to oneself, significant others, cultural group, and community/society at large; then prioritize list and rank.

Execution: Formulate a plan for the execution of the first choice and the alternatives to the first choice.

Communication: Review external demands and internal state: Has the gap been closed? Am I taking action to achieve my goals?

Knowledge Domain:

Options Knowledge: What types of job connect with my educational experience? What does a typical day look like?

Self-Knowledge: Values, interests, and skills; what am I looking for in...?

Case Study

Howard is a 21 year old studying psychology and is entering the fall semester of his senior year. He really enjoys his classes and is thinking of going on to graduate school but he is experiencing pressure from his family to earn a living after graduation. His family has expressed concern that with a psychology degree he will not be able to support his future family. They worry with a psychology degree he will not be able to do that. Howard's fiancé will graduate at the same time as him but she has already been accepted into a graduate program across the country. Howard is confused about what path to take upon graduation. He comes to the career center looking for help to address the concerns he has for the future and his family.

Decision Space Worksheet (DSW)

Name Howard Date 10/12/13

Decision you are making To go to graduate school or to get a job

Please list all thoughts, feelings, circumstances, people, or events that bear on the decision you are making.

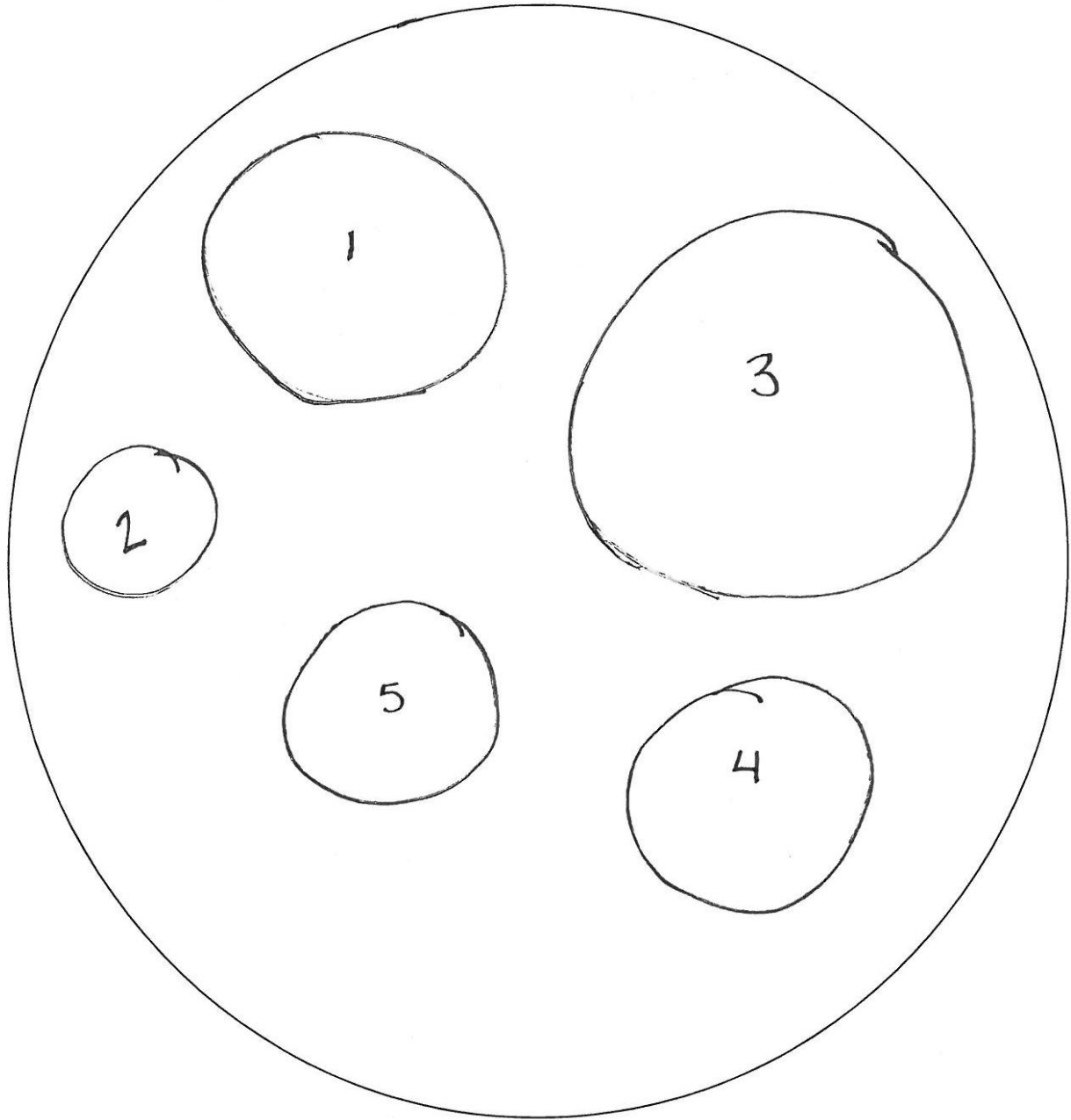
1. Opinion of parents
2. Money
3. Fiancé's plans
4. Graduate school programs
5. Ability to support future family
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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The Decision Space

Directions:

- The large circle below represents the total decision space.
- Within the large circle, draw smaller circles that represent the magnitude or the relative importance of each item listed on the Decision Space Worksheet (DSW).



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Additional Readings

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