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The Future of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in Foodservice Management: Millennial Students' Career Motivations and Aspirations

Foodservice Systems Management Education
Council 2019 Conference

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Outline

- Background
- Social Cognitive Career Theory
- Methods
- Results & Discussion
- Next Steps

Background

- Food and nutrition management is the fastest growing non-clinical sector of dietetics; projected to grow by 35% from 2010-2020 (Hooker et al., 2012)
- 10% RDNs are employed in food and nutrition management (AND, 2018)
- Despite employment stats for RDNs...
- Very little awareness of this career path among dietetic students (Holsipple, 1994; Hughes & Desbrow, 2005)

Background

- **Interest areas** (Markley & Huyck, 1992)
 - Health, disease and health care
 - Counseling and behavior change
 - Teaching and health promotion
 - Sports and fitness
 - Counseling and behavior change
 - Food and cooking
 - Private practice counseling

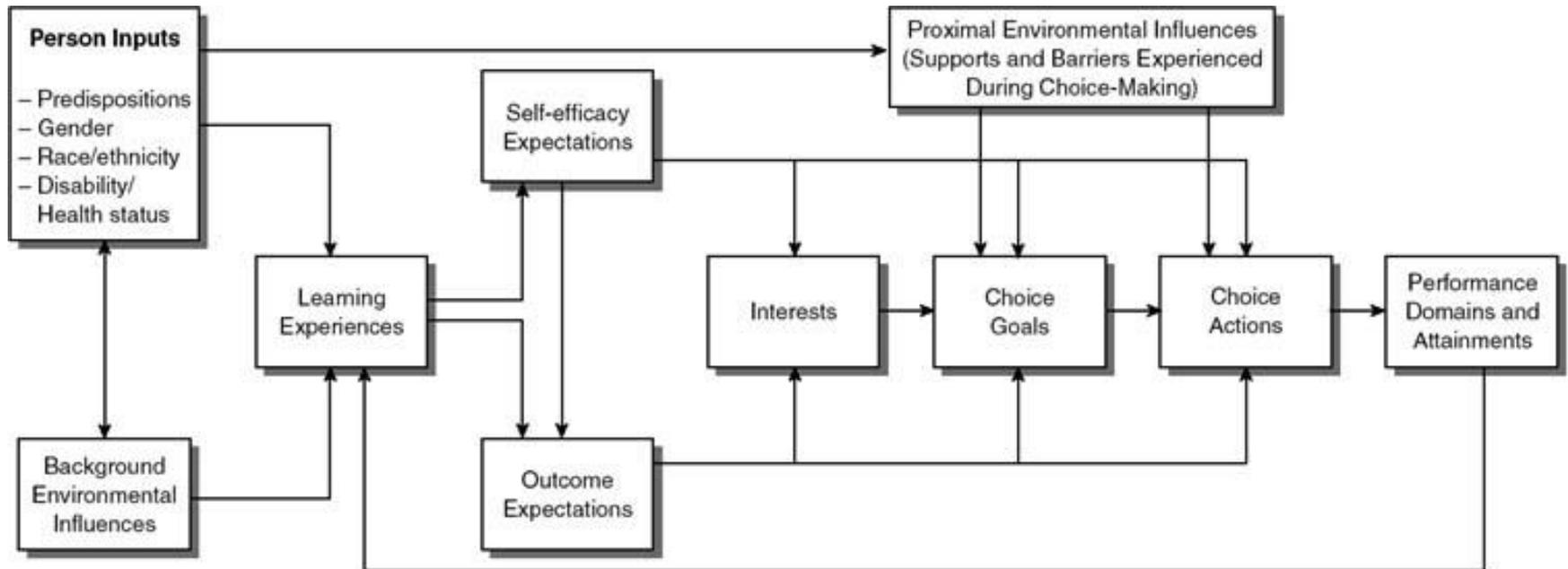
Background

- Factors influencing dietetic student career paths (Holsipple, 1994)
 - Interesting work
 - A secure future
 - Advancement potential
- Disconnect
- Old data, vaguely validated
- New generation

Background

- Millennial generation born 1980-1999
- Single most important factor in pursuing a career path...
- Career advancement, promotions, and pay raises
- Meaning, satisfaction
- Social aspect of work
- Work-life balance, though personal life prioritized
(Erikson, 2009; Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010; Zhang et al., 2007)

Social Cognitive Career Theory



Purpose & Objectives

- Investigate the career motivations and aspirations of millennial dietetic students
 - Identify the factors influencing dietetic students' preferred career paths
 - Characterize dietetic students' feelings towards foodservice management as a career path
 - Generate discussion on ways to increase awareness and interest in foodservice management

Methods

- Qualitative design
- Four focus groups
 - 60-80 minutes
 - Semi-structured
- 4-6 participants/group
 - 18-32 years old
 - Enrolled in ACEND-accredited program

Methods

- Recruitment
- Remuneration
- Audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using inductive open coding jointly by two researchers; codes grouped into themes, expressed as percentages, justified with verbatim quotes
- Triangulation

Results

- 4 focus groups/19 participants total
 - 89% female, 11% male
 - 47% undergraduate, 32% combined MS/DI, 21% MS with existing RDN credential
- 6 major themes

Career Paths and Driving Factors

Table 3: Career Paths and Driving Factors of Dietetics Students. (n=19)

| Theme | Code | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Anticipated career path | Multiple jobs | 15 | 79% |
| | First job: clinical | 12 | 63% |
| | Community dietetics | 8 | 42% |
| | Private practice/entrepreneurship | 5 | 26% |
| | Academia/research | 4 | 21% |
| | Outpatient counseling | 3 | 16% |
| | Sports nutrition | 2 | 11% |
| | School food | 2 | 11% |
| | Culinary nutrition | 2 | 11% |
| | Foodservice management | 2 | 11% |
| | Maternal nutrition | 1 | 5% |
| | Food media | 1 | 5% |
| | Global nutrition | 1 | 5% |
| Factors driving career decision | Flexibility | 13 | 68% |
| | Making a difference/helping others | 10 | 53% |
| | Culture/work environment | 9 | 47% |
| | Enjoyment/happiness | 8 | 42% |
| | Money | 8 | 42% |
| | Feeling challenged | 5 | 26% |
| | Stability/security | 4 | 21% |
| | Patient interaction | 3 | 16% |
| | Location | 3 | 16% |
| | Opportunity to advance | 2 | 11% |
| | Work-life balance | 2 | 11% |
| | Full-time status | 2 | 11% |
| | Opportunity to create a position | 1 | 5% |
| | Benefits | 1 | 5% |
| | Power | 1 | 5% |

- Flexibility
 - “Choosing your own hours”
 - “You don’t have to be stuck in something. You have options to go to at any point.”
- Making a difference
 - “Feeling like I would make an impact in some way”
 - “I wanted a job where I felt like I actually had a purpose and was making a difference in some way.”

Perceptions of a Career in FSM

Table 4: Dietetics Students' Perceptions of a Dietetics Career in Foodservice Management. (n=19)

| Theme | Code | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|--|-----------|------------|
| Appealing aspects of foodservice management | High pay | 6 | 32% |
| | Multiple roles/multitasking | 6 | 32% |
| | Working in unique settings | 6 | 32% |
| | Direct involvement in nutrition delivery/working with food | 4 | 21% |
| | Leadership/advancement opportunities | 3 | 16% |
| | Menu planning | 2 | 11% |
| | Organization | 1 | 5% |
| Unappealing aspects of foodservice management | Stress | 4 | 21% |
| | Long hours | 4 | 21% |
| | Lack of patient interaction/gratitude | 3 | 16% |
| | Rules/regulations | 2 | 11% |
| | Grunt work | 2 | 11% |
| | Food waste | 1 | 5% |
| Image of a foodservice management dietitian | Stress | 14 | 74% |
| | Managing employees | 9 | 47% |
| | Basement office | 8 | 42% |
| | Long hours | 8 | 42% |
| | Tasks: Excel spreadsheets, budgeting, ordering, menu creation, paperwork, tray testing | 7 | 37% |
| | Creativity | 5 | 26% |
| | Responsibility | 4 | 21% |
| | Strong personality | 4 | 21% |
| | Underappreciated | 4 | 21% |
| | High pay | 3 | 16% |
| | Multitasking | 3 | 16% |
| | Rules/limitations/policies | 2 | 11% |
| | Problem solving | 2 | 11% |
| | Hairnets | 2 | 11% |
| | Talking about food | 1 | 5% |
| | Food waste | 1 | 5% |
| Being dirty | 1 | 5% | |

- Multiple roles/multitasking
 - “Jack of all trades”
 - “Superwoman”
 - “You have to know how to fix the printer. You have to know how to cook the food. You have to know how to write a menu.”
- Stress
 - “She [preceptor] was just so stressed all the time, dealing with complaints and employees and just always running around. She never sat down.”
 - “Sometimes I would just have these nightmares about it...something would go wrong...and I’d wake up ahhhhh.”

Ideas to Elevate Awareness of Careers in FSM

Table 5: Dietetics Students' Ideas to Elevate Awareness of Careers in Foodservice Management. (n=19)

| Theme | Code | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|--|-----------|------------|
| Ideas to elevate awareness | Career seminar class | 8 | 42% |
| | Cooking/foodservice class | 7 | 37% |
| | Guest speakers | 7 | 37% |
| | Faculty with foodservice management focus | 5 | 26% |
| | Collaboration between nutrition department and business school | 5 | 26% |
| | Foodservice practicum | 3 | 16% |
| | Senior-level medical nutrition therapy culinary lab | 2 | 11% |
| | Strong foodservice management rotation in dietetic internship | 2 | 11% |
| | Participation in university operations | 1 | 5% |
| | Summer jobs | 1 | 5% |

- Faculty with FSM focus
 - “[Faculty name] was a real influence on SLU students. She was...the only dietitian in our department that was super enthusiastic about foodservice. Those are the people you look up to.”
- Collaboration between nutrition department and business school; FSM as a career path that
 - “Bridges the two”
 - “Middle point between those two careers”

Limitations & Future Research

- Limitations
 - Researchers knew many of the students
 - Two institutions were relatively similar; generalizability limited
- Future research
 - Career course of practicing foodservice managers
 - Career aspirations and motivations of next generation– “post-millennials”
 - Quantitative investigation– exploratory strategy of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Next Steps

- Content validation of survey using CVI methodology
- Collection of survey data

Research
a dietetic practice group of the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

TheDigest

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Validation of the Career Aspirations and Motivations of Dietetics Students (CAMDS) Instrument Using Content Validity Index Methodology

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INTRODUCTION

The *Dietetics Supply and Demand: 2010-2020* report predicted a workforce shortage by 2020 in that only 75% of the demand for credentialed dietetics practitioners would be met by the projected supply. Key factors identified as influencing the demand were a growing aging population, healthcare reform laws, growth in the food industry, and the prevalence of certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.¹ This issue is influenced in part by a limited number of dietetic internship spots, approximately twice as many students apply for dietetic internships as there are open positions.²

Hooker and colleagues suggested various interventions to address the need for credentialed dietetics practitioners, including "targeting (and marketing) high school counselors, students, and college/university students about the future of the dietetics profession."³ In order to strategically recruit students to the field of dietetics, an understanding of existing student motivations and future career aspirations is needed to inform an effective recruitment strategy within academic programs. Schools may utilize this information to assess incoming students' motivational profiles, design recruitment statements to communicate which types of motivation are known to characterize successful students and promote certain motivations for students that do not naturally have them.⁴

However, the existing quantitative data regarding student career aspirations is over 10 years old and may not accurately reflect the aims of current or prospective dietetics students. Furthermore, no published, validated, and quantitative instrument exists to capture the motivations and career aspirations of dietetics students. A validated instrument of this nature is needed to accurately assess nutrition and dietetics student career motivations and aspirations and to support the rigor of future research in this area.

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Conclusions

- Need for RDNs in FSM is growing
- Educators have advanced students' knowledge of FSM as a career path
- New challenge to foster positive interest
- Educators and industry professionals may play an active role in guiding students towards this career path in order to support the demand for competent FSM RDNs

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Thank you! Questions?

