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CAREER SELF-EFFICACY PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL GROUP MODEL  
FOR EMERGING ADULTS  
USING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INTERVENTIONS

BY

ANN C. STRACHAN

B.A., University of Massachusetts, 1983

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Counseling

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## DEDICATION

To my husband, Peter, for his encouragement to persevere when I felt overwhelmed and his patience to let me continue. For my children, Cara, Angus and Duncan, whose pride and love I receive and return with grace. To my mother for her belief in what I am capable of, and my father, posthumously, who taught me the importance of being true to oneself.

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## ABSTRACT

### CAREER SELF-EFFICACY PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL GROUP MODEL FOR EMERGING ADULTS USING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

#### INTERVENTIONS

BY

Ann C. Strachan

University of New Hampshire, 2008

Emerging adulthood is becoming recognized in research as a unique developmental phase where young people explore role identity, relationships, values and beliefs, and their potential for different vocational pursuits. Career counseling is not often considered by individuals who are experiencing difficulties in making optimal career choices, yet evidence supports the need for career interventions that address both career search strategies and personal growth. Positive psychology's emphasis on developing one's strengths as a venue for career satisfaction and overall well-being is an approach that may best assist emerging adults to find out what they are good at doing, and develop positive self-efficacy about their strengths and abilities that can be transferred to more optimal career choices. The psycho-educational group model provides a basis for identifying strengths, and learning and practicing how to use them within a social context. Self-knowledge and confidence can then be applied to the career search process, leading to fewer job changes and a more focused career direction.



## CHAPTER I

### RATIONALE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

Career counseling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in a state of evolutionary change. When Parsons first developed his career theory model in the early 1900's, the industrial age was at its height and jobs were centered around manufacturing, industry, and finance. In the past century, modernization of industry, a complex globalized economy, and an ever-expanding employment market has catapulted career decision-making to new dimensions with personal, social and economic consequences. Career counseling as a profession has evolved with the concurring changes.

Yet, more can be done according to the December, 2004 issue of *The Career Development Quarterly*, "It is time to advocate for a full continuum of career counseling services that range from the more traditional services of interest assessment, decision-making assistance, and goal-setting support to the other end of the continuum, where career counselors help workers reduce stress and learn to deal more effectively with workplace anger, depression, work/life role imbalance, and interpersonal conflicts on the job" (Dagley & Salter, 2004, p. 99). Formulating a career counseling approach to help those entering the job market make better, more informed choices about their career direction may help alleviate these potential ill-effects. This can be done through effective career counseling services that emphasize developmental needs and challenges as well as strengths and interests. This thesis proposes a psycho-educational group model that

addresses low self-efficacy in emerging adults who are experiencing multiple job changes and periods of unemployment as they explore career options.

Career decision-making is more than finding a job to pay the bills, and it's more than matching a job with one's interests and skills. Career counseling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to incorporate the complexities of the life spectrum, including mental health and emotional issues, family and leisure, lifestyle choices, and behaviors that impact overall quality of and purpose in life (Robitschek, 2005).

Several theories form the basis for career counseling interventions. Social cognitive theory addresses these concerns because of its emphasis on building confidence in finding occupational domains that maximize one's abilities and potential for satisfaction (O'Brien, 2003). Social cognitive career theory utilizes self-efficacy concepts from social cognitive theory to address the relationship between cognitions, learning experiences, abilities and values within a context that encourages action toward a specific career direction (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). According to the literature, career counseling practice most often incorporates a cognitive-behavioral or person-centered approach rather than a career counseling theory orientation (Harrington & Harrigan, 2006). The cognitive-behavioral approach emphasizes how our thoughts influence our feelings and actions. A person-centered approach emphasizes learning from our experiences and being open to emotional processing of these experiences (Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Practicing within a career counseling theory orientation provides a more holistic approach as self-efficacy is specifically addressed within the social cognitive theory framework for career counseling interventions. Positive psychologists purport that work

stress is better managed by utilizing one's positive individual traits to increase holistic satisfaction in work and life domains (Nelson & Simmons, 2005). Using interventions to reduce stress and lack of confidence can promote assurance in making career choices that lead to potential success and satisfaction in work and life (O'Brien, 2003).

### **Rationale**

The US Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), a 25-year longitudinal study of nearly 10,000 baby boomer individuals, providing significant data about employment trends through the developmental life span (BLS, 2006). A brief summary of the data reveals that between the ages of 18 and 40, the average number of jobs held was 10.5, with as many as seven of these jobs held between 18 and 25 (BLS, 2006).

*Work and Family* (1992) issued a report in 1992 utilizing this goldmine of data to study the number of job changes among workers between the ages of 18 and 29. The average number of jobs held by this age group was 7.6, averaging 36 weeks of work per year. There were significant differences in work rates among varying ethnic groups and gender. Men held an average of 8 jobs, and women an average of 7.2. Caucasian males on average experienced more jobs than Hispanics/Latinos, and Black/African American males experienced the fewest number of jobs. By age 29, this disparity declines, and Black/African American men have experienced the same number of jobs as Caucasians and Hispanics/Latinos, yet the average number of weeks employed is consistently greater for Caucasian men. Caucasian women average more jobs than both Hispanic/Latinas and Black/African American women (BLS, 1992).

It is important to note that the data described can lead to varying conclusions including the effect of external factors such as the economic recession of the 1980's as well as the internal psychological impact of this for job seekers. As we are currently approaching the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, similar economic conditions loom for emerging adults seeking to enter the work force. Finding a career path that is economically viable adds to the potential stress for young adults.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2006) study provides fuel for the need to understand the young adult phase and the complexity of the transitional experience. Emerging adult research has identified that individuals in this age group are most concerned with accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and financial independence (Arnett, 2001). Life transitions such as marriage, having children, and further education increase in importance as the young adult ages, but the initial concern is the attainment of self-responsibility and independence (Arnett, 2001). The young adult age group may be a particular target for career counseling due to the high degree of job turnover as individuals explore and "test out" different jobs for compatibility and interest, and discover the degree of fit and quality of training needed for a job.

Lack of career planning can lead to making choices based on opportunistic availability of work that does not consider the individual's particular strengths or long-term compatibility. When a job gives low satisfaction, then there is the hope that a new job will give higher satisfaction, therefore more frequent job changes are experienced. This is also known as the honeymoon-hangover effect that leads to a greater number of job turnovers (Harrington & Harrigan, 2006). While some individuals may benefit from

having a variety of experiences, can this period of multiple job turnover be avoided or be more constructive with quality career counseling interventions that help young adults focus on not only their interests, skills, educational level and degree of self-efficacy, but on their personal values and strengths, life goals, and formation of autonomous identity?

Career decision-making is a thoughtful process, and effective career counseling can foster positive attitudes and self-knowledge that has a lasting impact on the individual as he or she progresses through the life span. Developing a positive vocational identity as a young adult will alleviate stress and anxiety. In the United Kingdom, Wise and Millward (2005) conducted a study of career changers in their thirties. Their findings concluded that positive professional identity was achieved when individuals had positive feelings about their past achievements and desire for using skills, and felt appreciated and recognized for their skills, experience, and past achievements. In their study, self-awareness was identified as critical because work is best viewed as a reflection of personal values and identity; this knowledge base then gives the worker the confidence to make work choices that maximize their priorities, personal life, and financial needs (Wise & Millward, 2005).

Positive psychology is rising as a field that will likely attract practitioners to the career counseling field. Positive psychology used in counseling shifts intervention emphasis from a pathology orientation to one of strength-promotion. Within the framework of career counseling, learning to apply one's personal strengths and assets puts the the emphasis on creating possibilities, not dealing with acute suffering (Harris, Thoresen, & Lopez, 2007). Positive psychology views individual traits in terms of

virtues such as love, courage, gratitude and wisdom, and values interpersonal traits such as altruism, civility and community involvement (Seligman, 2002).

Career explorers who are seeking to find their niche professionally and personally can learn to utilize their strengths to lead fulfilling and satisfying life plans.

Implementing the strength-based concepts of positive psychology within career counseling has the potential to help those who are stressed by multiple job changes during the young adult years, and help to successfully balance values and commitment during the years approaching middle age. Positive psychology aims to identify strengths and capacities needed for individuals, families and society to thrive, enabling people to experience deep happiness, wisdom, and psychological, physical and social well-being that are all buffers against stress, and physical and mental illness (Caruthers, 2005).

### **Implications**

Observations in the December 2006 issue of the *Career Development Quarterly* point to a degree of disinclination for practitioners and potential clients to pursue career counseling. The authors posit that this is because the old practices of career counseling are not highly valued by individuals because the practices focus on a client's interests and job fit rather than on psychological needs. For career counseling to be effective, the emphasis needs to focus on helping clients and potential workers gain self-knowledge to successfully progress through life (Harrington & Harrigan, 2006). In addition, counselors interested in the specialty of career counseling need to view the field as more than a static enterprise of testing skills and interests, followed by summarizing results and creating plans for clients. Ideally, career counseling can be a rich process that incorporates both individual skills and interests while fostering development of identity and confidence.

There is a great deal of flexibility and creativity within career counseling theories, as well as a plethora of assessments for a range of information gathering. Although each perspective has a common theme of “helping people make suitable and satisfying career choices, and to expand their interests and capabilities,” (Robitschek, 2005, p. 377), there is also a need for fostering personal growth and empowerment (Robitschek, 2005).

Social cognitive theory addresses self-efficacy concerns including vicarious learning, social persuasion, personal performance accomplishments, and affective states (Brown & Lent, 1996; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005; O’Brien, 2003) and these can be addressed in a group setting. The emerging adult who has low self-efficacy for career decisions can benefit from a group counseling experience because the group will provide a social context in which to improve self-efficacy beliefs. A psycho-educational group model offers a setting to learn skills that support strength-enhancement and talents, thereby helping career decision-making confidence grow due to personal knowledge and locus of control (Chartrand & Rose, 1996).

The psycho-educational group model designed in this thesis is based on the developmental needs of the emerging adult, self-efficacy concerns regarding career and life choices, and strength-based interventions designed to increase self-efficacy. A group model such as this is applicable in college, community and career settings.

### **Definition of Terms**

Career counseling – Professional counseling specialization to assist clients with career concerns such as making career transitions, job-related stress, and searching for job or career (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

Cognitive-behavioral theory – Emphasizes how our thoughts influence our feelings and behaviors (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Emerging adult – Transitional developmental phase from approximately ages 18-25 that is marked by a self-concept considered post-adolescent and pre-adult (Arnett, 2000).

Flow – Feeling of total absorption in an activity or task that is challenging and goal-oriented (Belsky, 2007).

Narrative theory – Processing one's personal story to deconstruct and reconstruct for meaning and valuing of our experiences (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004).

Positive psychology – Construct that human beings have positive qualities that, when recognized and nurtured, can bring about lasting change and psychological health (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Psycho-educational group – Group therapy structure that combines skill building and acquiring useful information with the psychological effects of content on the individual (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Self-efficacy – Belief about one's abilities or capabilities to perform specific tasks that are central to the process of career decision-making (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

Signature strengths – Character traits that can be seen across time and in different situations, and are based on virtues that if practiced regularly by the individual, will bring meaning in life, engagement, and pleasure (Seligman, 2002).

Social Cognitive Theory – Developed by Albert Bandura emphasizing the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, identifying with others for better outcome expectations, and taking action to achieve personal goals (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).



Social Cognitive Career Theory – Provides a framework for addressing career concerns particularly related to cognitive factors affecting career interests and occupational choices, including performance attainment, self-efficacy, social persuasion, and vicarious learning (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

Social persuasion – Encouragement of efforts and accomplishments relating to specific career tasks (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

Triadic reciprocal model—Developed by Bandura and social cognitive theory where one's self-efficacy beliefs, expectations of outcomes, and personal goals are reciprocally related (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

Vicarious learning – Experiencing a situation through the lens of another with similar qualities to oneself (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005)..

Virtues – Six aspects of human character that are valued across cultures and are identified by positive psychologists as the foundation for signature strengths – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence (Seligman, 2002).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide relevant background information concerning the emerging adult developmental phase and the importance of career self-efficacy in this age group. In addition, interventions from positive psychology will be described and their implications for developing a psycho-educational career counseling group model that focuses on improving self-efficacy for the emerging adult.

#### **The Emerging Adult**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) longitudinal study that began in 1979, and tracked nearly 10,000 individuals through a 25 year span of work history, has identified the 18-29 year old age group as having the most frequent job changes. *Work and Family* (1992) estimated that an average of 7.6 jobs were held by individuals by the time they reached the age of 30 (BLS, 1992). Theoretical research has identified this age group as a unique developmental phase, namely the emerging adult.

Graduating from high school is a milestone achievement for many young people. The question of what to do next is often exciting as well as stressful. Options range from entering college or formal vocational training, having travel experiences or getting a job, depending on the individual's background and interests. If college or vocational training is a chosen direction, this requires further choices that will impact later career decisions, such as what to major in and whether this choice will lead to fulfilling employment.

Lack of confidence in one's ability to perform work-related tasks can cause self-imposed limits on career options of emerging adults. In addition, stress is heightened by frequent job changes as the young adult identifies his or her best career direction. Increasing self-efficacy is a needed intervention for some emerging adults' career development. Positive psychology's strength-based approach will be reviewed and discussed as a potentially helpful intervention.

Several scholars have dedicated much of their career research to understanding the emerging adult developmental phase. Arnett's (2000) contributions are foundational by providing rational evidentiary and theoretical support for making the emerging adult period a distinct and unique phase of human development. Respondents in Arnett's study of 18-25 year olds (2000) self-describe as neither adolescent, which is behind them chronologically, or as adult, because full adult responsibilities and stability have not yet been reached. This leaves them in an ambiguous state of answering both yes and no to the question of whether they consider themselves adults (Arnett, 2000).

Arnett's (2000) study also helped to identify what the 18-25 year old age group considers as markers for adulthood. Research evidence indicates that the traditional demographic transitions of marriage, having children, settling in to a career, and finishing education are not yet developmentally significant for the emerging adults' conception of what it means to reach adulthood because they have not yet been experienced. Consistently, in a variety of studies, the internal factors that surfaced as most important are: accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2000).

Arnett (2000) argues that the emerging adult period is one of self-identity exploration, attaining self-sufficiency, and exploring various options for life work. In addition, the emerging adult tests out various worldviews and experiences potential commitment in intimate relationships. Because the age range is so dynamic, and culturally there is not an established norm of behavior, there is no manual or guide for emerging adults. Arnett (2001) argues that a tacit norm is forming that allows the emerging adult the luxury to engage in experimentation of roles and explore possibilities in life, values and beliefs, hence the ability to delay life-role decisions to the mid-to-late twenties (Arnett, 2001). Research and counseling must take into account the range of individual differences, and understand that this phase is not always viewed as positive by emerging adults (Arnett, 2000).

Several studies will be reviewed that highlight specific implications for emerging adult development, including personal and psychological changes. These aspects of development have an impact on self-efficacy as the young person is struggling to form his or her identity that will lead to responsibility for self, independence, and financial autonomy.

### **Psychological Changes**

Galambos, Barker and Krahn (2006) followed a cohort group of 920 participants for seven years (from ages 17 to 25) to understand how changes in depression, self-esteem, and anger occur developmentally. Galambos et al. (2006) identified role status change and shift in social support as the primary contributors to fluctuations in the psychological well-being of emerging adults as they mature. Changes related to social support effect self-esteem, anger, and depression. Generally, Galambos et al. (2006)

found that psychological well-being improves in the 18-25 age range because of the experience of independence. Role status changes such as enrollment in college and moving away from home have a positive effect on psychological well-being; this links with Arnett's studies that identify independence as a stepping-stone to adulthood for emerging adults.

Galambos et al. (2006) reason that the emerging adulthood period is one marked by maturity, both psychologically and socially. Although it is a transitional time that can be filled with indecisiveness and lack of clear direction, the exploration both of self and the world or external environment, are a necessary part of the developmental process and the adaptation to adulthood. It is clear that financial independence is strongly linked to the ability to gain employment. The inability to find work has been shown to be a detriment to psychological well-being. Studies have shown that there is an increase in psychological disorders among young adults, such as depression, substance abuse and anxiety diagnoses, due to lack of employment (Galambos et al. 2006, as cited in Fergusson, 1997).

Galambos et al. (2006) conclude that individuals who experience losses in social support and employment generally have a harder time making the transition to adulthood. More unemployment is linked to increased depression and lower self-esteem. However, as young people leave home and test out new identities, it is natural that their social world will also shift. Changes in social support are an inherent transitional occurrence for emerging adults, and accompany the role transitions that emerging adults experience (Galambos et al, 2006). Efficacy theory can be applied to role transitions because a

negative view of past performance accomplishments and social influences may be impacting psychological growth.

### **Meaning-making and Identity**

McLean and Pratt (2006) examined the role of identity status and meaning-making for emerging adults in a longitudinal study of 17-23 year olds using narrative theory. Narrative therapy emphasizes the value of reconstructing one's life story objectively leading to a sense of empowerment and greater personal meaning (Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). The focus of McLean and Pratt's (2006) study was on narrative accounts of turning points in an individual's life that help them to identify both the meaning of tension-filled events and formation of their personal identity. A turning point in an individual's life is when substantial change occurs. In order for the turning point to have impact, the individual needs to make meaning of the experience that is connected to understanding oneself. McLean and Pratt (2006) found that meaning-making lessons become more sophisticated with age (McLean & Pratt, 2006).

Meaning-making is central to identity development. McLean and Pratt's (2006) research highlights the importance of personal exploration in identity development, through a narrative process of identifying meaning in life stories. Insights are gained from understanding how one resolves the identity crisis or struggle, and commits to an identity as a resolution of the struggle. McLean and Pratt (2006) also posit that when optimism and generativity are present by age 23, the individual is able to make more sophisticated meanings of events in his or her life. Meaning-making relates to self-efficacy beliefs, as one transcribes what his or her abilities are in relation to self-identity. Career development experiences were found to be greater among individuals who

narrated more advanced identity statuses (McLean & Pratt, 2006, as cited in Sankey & Young, 1996).

Both the exploration of and commitment to an identity are developmental. When a person is going through the process of discovering his or her identity, yet has not committed to knowing who they are, this can be a period marked by apathy about the future, relationships and distancing from family. Anxiety, sensitivity to moral issues, and ambivalent family relationships can occur when the individual is exploring his or her identity, but has not yet been able to commit to resolving the internal struggle. When both exploration and commitment are completed, at this point the individual has reached maturity and readiness for adulthood (McLean & Pratt, 2006).

Emmons (2005) further explored meaning-making in terms of personal goals and subjective well-being. Meaninglessness in life has been scientifically shown to lead to psychological distress and pathology. Its opposite, meaningfulness, or purpose in life and a sense of coherence, has been shown to influence positive functioning such as life satisfaction and general happiness (Emmons, 2005). Emmons (2005) and other researchers including Ebersole and Wong (Emmons, 2005, as cited in Wong, 1998) used a variety of methodologies in their research such as interviews, surveys and rating assessments. Each researcher independently uncovered the need for life meaning within work and achievement domains. Believing in the worth of one's work, committing to the work, and experiencing personal challenge when working are the cornerstone cognitive characteristics that help provide overall positive well-being (Emmons, 2005).

Emmons' (2005) study looked at themes related to subjective well-being that were manifested in personal goals including work, intimacy, spirituality and

transcendence. He used the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* to measure the cognitive component of life satisfaction. What he uncovered in his research is that not all goals are equal in their depth and ability to promote transformation. Emmons (2005) argues that for goals to have life-meaning properties, they need to address themes of intimacy, generativity and spirituality. Intimacy involves close personal relations, providing a sense of belonging and connection; spirituality involves transcendence of self, and appreciating one's place in a much larger world; and generativity points to concern for the next generations, the environment, and external community. Generativity leads to a sense of self-worth and has a positive impact on well-being, greater happiness and life satisfaction. According to studies on various age groups, these findings were consistent across the life span, including young adults (Emmons, 2005).

In Emmons' (2005) study, participants who rated intrinsic goals that promote personal growth and community highly also reported higher levels of subjective well-being. Attainment of extrinsic goals such as financial success, social recognition, and physical attractiveness were negatively correlated with subjective well-being, including vitality and self-actualization. Internal resources such as self-confidence, social skills, and self-discipline were significant factors for subjective well-being. Extrinsic resources of material possession, attractiveness and money were rated as mostly irrelevant to the attainment of personal goals (Emmons, 2005).

Identity development, personal goals, and meaning-making are all important aspects of one's self-efficacy development. A commitment to goals that promote life meaning is an important aspect of overall intervention quality in counseling. Emmons (2005) cites that goals that strive to avoid, such as "spend less time alone", have less



punch than goals that are positively action oriented, such as “spend more time with others.” Research suggests that avoidance-focused goals have a negative impact on interpersonal and intrapersonal satisfaction, and physical health (Emmons, 2005). Reframing to positive actions and thoughts will aid the process of self-efficacy development in emerging adults. The next section will focus on the importance of self-efficacy in career development.

### **Career Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adults**

The emergence of self-efficacy research stems from Social Cognitive Career Theory. Albert Bandura’s triadic reciprocal model conceptualizes the relationship between personal goals, self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2005). A large number of studies have been conducted on these topics because of their applicability to career development. Self-efficacy is synonymous with self-confidence, and is shaped by one’s belief in his or her own personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning experiences, social encouragement, and anxiety management (Paulsen & Betz, 2004).

Belief in one’s own ability to successfully perform a task or behavior is the lynchpin to the strength and level of self-efficacy beliefs. The degree to which this is attained is dependent upon self-knowledge and one’s self-concept. Betz and Hackett (1981) were the first researchers to incorporate Bandura’s self-efficacy theory in a study of college-aged women’s career development. They hypothesized that sex-role socialization was impacting career development expectations of women, and this would be measurable in their career self-efficacy. Women’s low or weak self-efficacy in non-traditional careers was a limiting factor in career options (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Results

from their empirical study supported the notion that women's self-efficacy expectations were substantially lower than their male counterparts in relation to traditional and non-traditional occupations. Because women had less exposure to performance accomplishments necessary for non-traditional fields, then increasing their exposure was necessary to increase self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1981). This study was the catalyst for much future research on how self-efficacy beliefs impact career decision-making, job search, and belief in one's ability to perform in specific domains of work.

Brown and Lent (1996) tested several hypotheses relating to the potentially limiting aspect of career options based on underdeveloped self-efficacy beliefs. Broadening an individual's career options can be achieved by addressing areas of low self-efficacy. Brown and Lent (1996) found that faulty self-efficacy beliefs due to negative outcome expectations and lack of, or negative, prior experience need to be modified in counseling. Actively processing success experiences, and reviewing past performance accomplishments with the emphasis on reframing the negative perceptions will help to overcome barriers and cognitive distortions (Brown & Lent, 1996).

Brown and Lent (1996) found that an individual's perception of their past performance accomplishments were the most valuable indicator of their self-efficacy beliefs. In three particular cases, they illustrated how a client in his or her twenties eliminated certain career directions based on their belief that they did not have the ability to perform them, despite their high scores on interest in the particular occupational area. Through discussion in counseling and formal career assessment, such as the *Campbell Interests and Skills Survey*, the clients were able to re-evaluate their efficacy beliefs and gain the confidence to pursue the occupational field. Of considerable importance in

counseling is the need to address the client's internal locus of control, continually probing as to why the client believed he or she performed as he or she did, consequently encouraging him or her to seek alternative interpretations if he or she is focused on lack of success (Brown & Lent, 1996).

For emerging adults who have low self-efficacy, taking control of their own lives to achieve desired responsibility and independence can be fostered by action-oriented endeavors. Chen's (2006) article is particularly enlightening regarding human agency and intentionality in the broad life-career context. Human agency is entrenched in Bandura's self-efficacy theory because it addresses the capacity and potential of an individual to have control over the nature and quality of his or her own life. Control is gained when there is an understanding of self, as well as having meaning and purpose in life (Chen, 2006, as cited in Bandura, 2001a). The combination of intention and action by the individual results in making changes and making things happen. Yet, things cannot happen until one believes one has the capability to be a change agent. Therefore, career self-efficacy is the foundation for human agency, and includes interpersonal, intrapersonal and contextual endeavors. Interest development, attitudes and values, and the process of making choices, all intertwine to increase human agency in career development (Chen, 2006).

How one thinks and how one acts will determine the degree of human agency and self-efficacy. Addressing the areas of self-awareness, vision, motivation, personal meaning and life goals in career counseling will best help the individual to intentionally take positive action in his or her life-career development (Chen, 2006). Counseling that emphasizes action encourages the client to make choices that incorporate self-exploration

and commitment (McLean, 2006). Action plans, including examples such as education and learning, career counseling, gathering career information, and informational interviewing, should relate to the clients' self-awareness, intention and initiatives, thereby making the action congruent with the client's personal goals. Reviewing the lessons learned from these experiences can further clarify what the next action will be. This opens the door for empowerment, sense of purpose, and greater locus of control about career direction. Chen argues that effectively utilizing an individual's intrinsic strengths to set a career course, along with a better understanding of self, in career counseling interventions will promote self-efficacy and human agency (Chen, 2006).

Paulsen and Betz (2004) studied confidence variables in career decision-making self-efficacy using a sample of 627 undergraduate students. They found that career indecisiveness is inversely related to career decision-making self-efficacy. Unclear self-identity, fear of commitment, and unfocused exploratory behavior are all areas that lead to the inability to set a course of action that will promote making independent decisions, accepting responsibility for oneself and gaining financial independence (Arnett, 2000). Their study also suggested a positive relationship between low confidence in academic areas and reduced career decision-making self-efficacy (Paulsen & Betz, 2004).

### **Literature Gaps**

Unfortunately, much of the research on emerging adults and career counseling focuses on college students. This is addressed in the 2003 annual review of *The Career Development Quarterly* (2004), where Dagley and Salter (2004) summarized that much of the research looked at college-age and college-educated workers, creating a gap between those who are not of the mainstream culture with access to education (Dagley &

Salter, 2004). College-educated persons are a relatively small slice of the population, and much current research focuses on those who are higher educated with fewer life/career barriers. Individuals who are at higher risk for career and life development difficulties have a somewhat different set of self-efficacy limiting beliefs than more educated young adults.

Social cognitive interventions for individuals outside the realm of education have been studied, although they are not always focused on the emerging adult age group. However, the studies address the adult developmental markers of independence and responsibility for self, particularly in terms of addressing barriers and having control over one's life.

Not included in Dagley and Salter's (2004) review was Rickwood, Roberts, Batten, Marshall, and Massie's (2004) research on counseling high risk clients in career development. High risk clients include minorities such as those with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, homosexuals, people living in poverty, refugees and immigrants. Rickwood et al.'s (2004) research viewed high risk career seekers in terms of resiliency interventions, particularly focusing on poor decision-making skills and lack of motivation to succeed in life and career development. Resiliency is defined as the ability to overcome obstacles or negative outcomes when circumstances are discouraging or disruptive (Rickwood et al., 2004). Learning to adapt and having the inner resources to overcome inhibiting challenges is exhibited by resilient behaviors, thoughts and actions (Rickwood et al., 2004, as cited in American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Helping high risk clients identify and overcome barriers is critical for increasing their self-efficacy. Rickwood et al. (2004) suggest this can be done by converting

abstract ideas such as hopes and dreams into concrete real-life events and actions.

Interventions include supporting growth of self-awareness and understanding one's core values and interests. Making meaningful connections with other people, building lifelong relationships, and purposefully celebrating successes are all factors that will increase resiliency and thereby self-efficacy in the high risk client's career search (Rickwood et al., 2004).

### **Implications for Interventions**

In the 2004 *Career Development Quarterly* annual review, Dagley and Salter (2004) noted that specific research on career intervention process and outcomes is still relatively unsupported by empirical evidence. An exception to this is Kelly and Pulver's (Dagley & Salter, 2004) study that analyzed four different indecision types among more than 500 college students. Specific interventions were targeted for each type based on measures of indecision, ability and personality. Cluster analysis findings highlighted the differentiation between well-adjusted information seekers who require minimal intervention focusing primarily on information gathering; neurotic indecisive information seekers who need to engage in personal counseling to address decision-making conflicts and self-knowledge; and low ability, yet confident decision-makers who are encouraged to explore experiential learning opportunities. Finally, uncommitted extraverts will develop a written action plan to inspire their motivation for committing to a plan (Dagley & Salter, 2004).

The studies described in this section support the theory of self-efficacy as a critical aspect of career counseling with emerging adults. Lack of experience and limiting cognitive beliefs of one's ability to perform are problems that some emerging

adults face given the lack of exposure to career possibilities, as well as external pressure from outside sources that encourage or discourage a career direction. In counseling, it is important to differentiate low self-efficacy from potentially low interest, as someone may not realize they are limiting choices of potential interest because of low self-efficacy. The next section will focus on the uses of positive psychology interventions that will benefit emerging adults' self-confidence.

### **An Overview of Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology was developed by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi in the last 20 years in response to their professional experience and frustration with the pursuit of fixing what is wrong with a person in the discipline of psychology. Seligman and his colleagues developed a new field called positive psychology, based on their own personal enlightenment that human beings have positive qualities that, when recognized and nurtured, can bring about greater and longer lasting change and psychological health than traditionally focused pathological approaches (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology is defined as incorporating the subjective experiences of the past, present and future in terms of their value to the individual. With a view toward the past, individuals value well-being, contentment and satisfaction. Flow and happiness dominate the present as valued subjective experiences. The future holds hope and optimism. By focusing on these themes, an individual can find his or her own level of these properties in life, and develop characteristics that will lead to a greater sense of well-being. Internal attributes such as courage, love, forgiveness, talent, wisdom, work, spirituality, and future-mindedness all characterize positive traits. Equally important are

the external contextual relationships of community, responsibility, nurturance, tolerance and work ethics (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Seligman (2002) defines a personal strength as a character trait, in that it can be seen across time and in different situations. Strengths are valued in their own right, and are generally prized in every culture in the world (Seligman, 2002). Seligman created a survey to identify one's signature strengths which are based on six virtues that are ubiquitously recognized as aspects of good character: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Within these clusters, Seligman identified 24 subcategories that pinpoint specific strengths within. Once the individual completes a self-report survey, the list of top five strengths are viewed, and he or she matches the criteria with what he or she believes is most true of him or her. The areas that the test taker most agrees with are identified as one's signature strengths. Further validation of strengths can be achieved in counseling and by having friends or family complete a similar survey of the client to ensure greater accuracy (Seligman, 2006). Seligman posits that using your signature strengths in daily life will bring meaning in life, engagement, and pleasure. This in turn leads to authentic happiness and abundant gratification (Seligman, 2002).

Csikszentmihalyi (Belsky, 2007) contends that when an individual is engaged in an activity while using his or her signature strengths, the person will experience flow. Flow is a term used to describe the feeling of total absorption in a challenging activity where a sense of time and energy expended are suspended. Csikszentmihalyi contends that when an individual finds flow, he or she can gain a sense of the career direction that is both challenging and fulfilling, and suits his or her skills and interests (Belsky, 2007).



## **A Review of Strength-Based Interventions** **for Self-Efficacy Concerns in Career Counseling**

In the previous sections of this chapter, several aspects of self-efficacy were reviewed that have implications for career counseling with the emerging adult. In order to understand the validity of positive psychology's strength-based focus of interventions, this section will review empirical and literary reviews of how using strengths can increase self-efficacy for emerging adult career seekers.

Carr (2004) defines efficacy beliefs as judgments we make about our capabilities (Carr, 2004). Our efficacy beliefs vary in level depending on the task at hand, and depending on our expectation of outcomes. Developing signature strengths will lead to greater belief in one's abilities. Researchers highlighted in the previous sections emphasize differing areas that lead to greater self-efficacy, and each has an aspect that may benefit from a positive approach.

Chen (2006) proposes that self-awareness, vision, motivation, personal meaning and life goals are central to self-efficacy conceptions. He proposes that action plans can increase human agency and that, by utilizing intrinsic strengths to set a career course, the individual gains empowerment, a sense of purpose, and greater locus of control in career choices. Brown and Lent (1996) support the perception of past performances as critical to changing self-efficacy beliefs. Reviewing past experiences for accomplishments that show strengths will aid this process.

Betz and Hackett (1981) theorize that increasing exposure to gain performance accomplishment is needed to build self-confidence. Paulsen and Betz (2004) purport that career decisiveness will improve through greater self-identity, commitment and focused

exploratory behavior. Carruthers and Hood (2004) suggest that resiliency is increased with greater social connectedness and life-work balance that includes participation in leisure activities. In order to incorporate these identified aspects of increasing self-efficacy for the emerging adult, positive psychology interventions will need to provide support for addressing these needs (Harris, 2007).

Harris et al. (2007) contend that language used in counseling can be pathology-based or strength-based. Counselors may describe a client based on symptoms of illness such as hopeless, lacking motivation, or dysphoric. Yet, these people also exhibit coping skills, however potentially limited, but these are the basis of strengths. Using vocabulary that has a strength-based perspective with clients, similar to cognitive restructuring, will assist clients to re-channel their own vocabulary that promotes healthier self-talk (Harris et al. 2007). Harris et al. (2007) state that supporting and maintaining the presence of strengths and resources, developing skills and knowledge, and reducing the presence of any liabilities, need to be addressed in counseling.

Harris et al. (2007) caution that before embarking on strength promotion in counseling, it is important to ensure that the intervention has a rationale that supports the overall counseling goals. Therefore, strength-based interventions need to have an empirical base for outcomes before they can be accepted by practitioners, colleagues, insurance companies and clients (Harris et al., 2007). Research supporting outcomes will be discussed in the next section.

As young people seek to find out who they are, what they want to do with their lives, and how they will get there, there is much angst and worry, as well as excitement about both the present and the future. The choices can seem overwhelming and the

process to get there, daunting. How each of us deals with this through our life span is a result of our personality, our sense of how well we can overcome challenges, and how much we believe that we are capable of making a decision that will lead us in a positive direction. Several studies highlight the differing aspects of how self-confidence is both hindered as well as strengthened. The individual hoping to select a career choice that will provide independence, responsibility and financial independence may benefit from a psycho-educational career counseling group. Incorporating self-efficacy theory with a focus on attaining skills and abilities may help to gain greater confidence in career choices.

Self-confidence, self-knowledge, and interpretation of our experiences can all be addressed in psycho-educational group counseling. With this in mind, the next section will review two group models in the literature that demonstrate how positive psychology and increasing self-efficacy have been practiced.

### **Group Model with Positive Psychology**

Seligman, Rashid, and Parks (2006) conducted studies to empirically test the outcomes of positive psychology interventions for individuals with depressive disorders. Seligman et al.'s (2006) study tested the assumption that depression and its symptoms of lack of engagement, positive emotion, and felt meaning can be alleviated by shifting the symptoms to causes of depression. With this pivotal emphasis shift from symptoms to causation, it was hypothesized that positive emotion, engagement and meaning would act as the interventions that would lessen depression.

Seligman et al.'s (2006) studies were conducted using a comparison of group therapy and traditional talk therapy constructs. One study involved approximately 40

undergraduate and graduate students, an admittedly small sample with generalizable limitations, yet each participant fell within the DSM-IV and *Beck Depression Inventory* of major depressive disorder. A second study involved 327 University of Pennsylvania students, 69% Caucasian, among whom 97 of the participants were clinically depressed (Seligman, 2005).

The psychotherapy group model incorporated 12 exercises that had demonstrated efficacy in previous uncontrolled studies. Weekly exercises included aspects of using identified strengths, keeping journals of three good things that happened each day, writing a biography, a gratitude visit, active and constructive response to others, and recording moments that are savored (Seligman et al., 2006). The concepts of having a pleasant, engaged and meaningful life underpin the themes of each exercise. The theory emphasizes developing signature strengths rather than focusing on changing negative thoughts through a cognitive behavioral model.

The second study compared two psychotherapy groups for alleviation of depressive symptoms; each group with severe symptoms of depression. Participants were randomly assigned to either a positive psychotherapy group or a no-treatment control group. Participants were all young adults at the university. The two groups had between 8 and 11 members and met for two-hour sessions over a six-week period. Outcome measures were based on changes on the *Beck Depression Inventory* and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale*. Post intervention assessment was conducted three times up to one year following treatment (Seligman et al., 2006). Results from the study found that group psychotherapy using positive psychology interventions showed clinically significant symptom reduction and increase in life satisfaction. The no-treatment control group did

not experience as much symptom reduction and improvements were not as long lasting. The findings supported the assertion that positive psychotherapy interventions were helpful in improving symptoms of depression, and that the experience led to a longer-lasting change in behaviors that sustained improved mood for up to one year (Seligman et al., 2006).

The second group model for review is an application of social cognitive theory for career interventions with at-risk populations. Chartrand and Rose (1996) developed the psycho-educational group model for those with limited access to educational and occupational opportunities (Chartrand & Rose, 1996). The group design was formulated for an adult female prison population where confidence in ability to perform career tasks and the presence of significant barriers affected self-efficacy beliefs. Confidence and overcoming barriers were deemed by the authors to be more important for career interventions than focusing on traditional interest exploration. The career intervention program, called Project PROVE (Preventing Recidivism through Opportunities in Vocational Education), was unique in that social cognitive theory was used as the framework for the exercises and group strategy (Chartrand & Rose, 1996).

The psycho-educational group program met for 12-weeks with inmates scheduled for prison release in six months. Details of the group structure are not mentioned, and the outcomes are not discussed because the program was just being developed when the article was written. The program was intended to be continuously offered to prison inmates, with changes being made based on evaluations. The reason for including this article is that it outlines a clear group model based on self-efficacy themes of personal

performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states and reactions (Chartrand & Rose, 1996).

Components of the program begin with identity formation based on contexts of learning experiences, opportunities and life events. The meaning of roles are discussed, with an emphasis on how these relate to career identity and overcoming barriers.

Vicarious learning situations are reinforced by assigning a mentor for each group member who has gone through similar experiences and can share his or her career development.

Social persuasion is achieved through encouragement of efforts and accomplishments relating to specific career tasks. Reviewing past performance accomplishments is central to understanding how personal attributes and new learning experiences can promote positive growth. Goal setting exercises focus on what is attainable and measurable, and must be positively stated. A life line exercise is used to highlight important past events and anticipate future accomplishments in order to build self-efficacy, motivation for career planning, and positive identity (Chartrand & Rose, 1996).

These two group studies have different goals than the psycho-educational group model developed in this thesis. However, they form a basis for the structure proposed, and give examples of how to incorporate positive psychology interventions within a Social Cognitive Career Theory framework. Seligman et al.'s (2006) study is conducted with an emerging adult population with depressive disorders, although the participants are from a demographically limited arena. Chartrand and Rose's (1996) study is focused on high-risk individuals with limited academic and occupational experiences. The age group is adults over 18, so it is safe to assume that some of the participants are beyond

the emerging adult phase. However, the concepts for high-risk career seekers in terms of self-efficacy are demonstrated well for the purpose of developing a comprehensive career counseling group model.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL GROUP COUNSELING MODEL

In this chapter, the structure of a psycho-educational group counseling model will be explained that will incorporate aspects of positive psychology interventions for emerging adults who are experiencing low confidence in career choices. The rationale, objectives, practical considerations, procedures, and methods of evaluation will be described (Corey & Corey, 2006). Group participants will gain an understanding of their unique strengths in relation to how they have handled past work and life experiences. With this knowledge, members will gain insight into their cognitive process for career choices, and gain confidence to pursue career goals that fit their personality and lifestyle.

#### **Why Use A Psycho-Educational Counseling Group?**

Corey and Corey (2006) define psycho-educational counseling groups as a collection of individuals who have similar concerns involving interpersonal and problem-solving issues that are based in a conscious awareness of feelings, thoughts and behavior. The purpose of a psycho-educational counseling group is not to address major psychological or emotional disorders. For this, a psychotherapy group is more appropriate. Psycho-educational counseling groups have a structured curriculum and are for normally functioning individuals to have an interactive feedback experience that will help to foster interpersonal growth. Developing inner resources of personal strength and addressing particular barriers that are blocking development are aspects of the group



process that will help members understand themselves better as well as learn new coping strategies (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Herr, Cramer and Niles (2004) contend that career counseling groups are more than career guidance. The group process involves access to information relevant to each member's personal characteristics and the implication of these to various options available. The psycho-educational component addresses information-seeking, skills practice, common goals and established norms. The group works together toward the goal of satisfying the individual needs of the group members (Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004).

The psycho-educational counseling group model provides an optimum opportunity to incorporate positive psychology interventions for emerging adults with low self-efficacy for making career choices. Dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors can be unlearned and re-framed in group situations due to the nature of interpersonal interaction within the group process (Herr et al., 2004) and in the context of structured content. Because low self-efficacy is often the result of beliefs about one's ability and confidence in particular areas, learning new attitudes and beliefs can be incorporated as a strategy of the group and help define the characteristics of group members.

Benefits to psycho-educational group counseling are numerous as an intervention strategy for emerging adults with low self-efficacy. Interpersonally, group members can focus on each other's self-perceptions, and can help one another correct faulty beliefs or work through barriers that are limiting one's choices. Limiting the group to the emerging adult developmental period provides a setting for exploring similar experiences because of the group's generational and cultural common bonds. Corey and Corey (2006) write

that a structured group benefits from members sharing similar problems and concerns and have similar skill development needs. Members can share external concerns relating to economic factors and barriers as well as internal developmental factors. Characteristic identity concerns common among emerging adults will help participants consider questions relating to who they are, what they want to become, and what their life will be like if they succeed in becoming what they want to be (Herr et al. 2004).

The group support setting provides reassurance that others are having the same confidence concerns about their careers and their future. Identifying strengths and practicing the utilization of these strengths within the context of respect and acceptance will be a shared experience where feedback and suggestions from other members will enhance each member's ability to change and grow (Herr et al., 2004). Group support will also provide the social persuasion necessary for building self-efficacy beliefs and encourage practice outside and within the group.

### **Creating a Group Model – the Career Confidence Counseling Group**

The process of creating a viable model for career counseling is enhanced by utilizing planning guidelines for designing and evaluating a new program. A solid model is one that is replicable and demonstrates accountability, increasing the viability of the model as effective and efficient in its purpose (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). This author's hope is that by setting down these guidelines, interested parties from any community will be able to follow this program example in order to create its own career counseling group that addresses self-efficacy and intrinsic strengths. The organization of this chapter will follow the steps outlined by Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2005) for designing and implementing a career counseling model as

well as follow the evaluation process outlined by Astramovich and Coker (2007). Within this framework, the methodology of the Career Confidence Counseling Group Model will be incorporated.

To begin the process of program planning, it is necessary to define and identify the targeted population as well as conduct a needs assessment of the services that are being planned. Objectives of the program are created based on the resultant needs as well as form the core of the group content. The objectives are formed as measurable actions that will demonstrate the degree of change or learning by the program. These are also known as outcome measures. Objectives are often based on instruments such as assessments, formal and informal surveys, and interviews. These form the basis for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the program, and provide concise and clear feedback to the stakeholders and program leaders.

Once the objectives have been established, implementing the program follows with planning how services will be delivered, the program content, and overall costs. Promotion of the program is to attract interested stakeholders who may offer financial and community support as well as attract participants to the program (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Marketing the program based on needs and core content will aid promotion. Each of these will form an outline for the program model this author is proposing.

Following is a brief summary of the design and implementation steps as outlined by Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2004) and Astramovich and Coker (2007). The subsequent headings will address each step of program planning in sequential order: defining the target population; needs, objectives and instruments; delivery and leader

credentials; program content; cost; promotion and group screening; and finally, evaluation and accountability. Each will be explained within the context of forming the proposed psycho-educational career counseling group.

### **Defining the Target Population**

The target population is defined as emerging adults, ages 18-26, with low self-efficacy for career development. The target population is those who live within a geographic area, and are not limited to any particular ethnic, socioeconomic, academic or religious group. Initially, individuals will self-identify with low-self-efficacy or be referred by an outside professional or community member. Prospective members are those who lack confidence in choosing a career path and are not fully aware of what they are truly capable of or interested in doing. Screening for group members within the target population will be examined in a later section.

### **Needs**

Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis provide rationale and current research demonstrating many of the career counseling needs of some emerging adults, specifically regarding areas of low self-efficacy, which are impacting successful transition to adulthood and steady employment. Research has shown that psychological consequences are greater for individuals who lack direction, who have unstable or nonexistent support systems, have not formed personal identity through meaning and purpose in their lives, and generally lack self-knowledge. Acquiring belief in one's capabilities and taking positive action towards change have been demonstrated in the literature to address low self-efficacy concerns of young adult career seekers. Counseling interventions will be based on meeting these needs.

Further clarification of the target population's needs within various geographic areas may be acquired by visiting local employment agencies, college counseling services, and community mental health vocational centers that work with young adults. Feedback regarding employment trends, psychological stability, and general concerns for this age group may help to guide program planning and implementation. Specific exercises within the program content can be modified based on these needs. The added bonus to this effort is that these organizations can then be informed of the proposed program and asked to be stakeholders in its formation and development. Conducting a focus group of young adults may also be beneficial, with a screening process that selects for those who lack confidence in career development.

### **Objectives and Instruments**

The goals of the group will be for each member to become aware of his or her own areas of low self-confidence, identify personal strengths, and practice specific interventions that will bolster self-confidence and self-awareness. Individuals within the group will apply this knowledge to career decision-making and job search strategies that will incorporate personal strengths and greater self-efficacy beliefs.

Objective 1: At the end of this counseling group, participants will be able to identify three intrinsic strengths unique to them and be able to incorporate activities to reinforce these strengths in their daily lives, based on the *Values in Action Inventory of Strengths*.

Objective 2: At the end of this counseling group, participants will identify at least one potential career direction based on strong interest and positive efficacy as shown by *The Strong Interest Inventory Assessment*.

Objective 3: At the end of this counseling group, participants will have improved by a measure of 50% on self-efficacy scores in at least one skill area on the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale*.

The self-assessment instruments selected for the group program assist in determining whether the individual is particularly incongruent in their self-efficacy and interests; in other words, people who are not realistic about their capabilities and may underestimate them (Betz, 2004). The *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale* can be used as a pre- and post-test measure of change.

The *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy*, created by Betz and Taylor, has a short form version available that is a 25-item self report inventory measuring general confidence in career-related tasks and career decision-making. The theoretical bases of the instrument are Bandura's self-efficacy theory, and Crite's model of career maturity including self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem solving. Scoring is based on a confidence continuum where higher scores reflect greater confidence in career-related tasks. Estimated total reliability score is .93, and subscale scores range from .73 for self-appraisal, .83 for goal selection, and .69 for problem-solving. Validity is demonstrated by positive correlations with vocational identity and negative correlations with career indecision measures. The Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy scale is correlated with general self-efficacy across the population therefore is not related to age, gender or ability (O'Brien, 2003).

*The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-AS)* has a theoretical basis of positive psychology and social cognitive theory. The measures are deemed reliable with validity continually being assessed in current research studies. Psychometric data shows

satisfactory alphas on all scales of  $>.70$ . Test-retest correlations for all scales over a 4 month period are substantial at  $>.70$  with internal consistency. The instrument is a 240-item Likert scale self-report questionnaire that is structured to measure strengths from 24 dimensions of character within six cross-cultural virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. The power of the assessment is that it can show an individual what he or she does well in comparison to other measured strengths of that particular individual. Any character strength has the potential to be developed. The authors caution that answers can be faked, so in a group setting such as the model designed for this thesis, it will be important for participants to weigh their own lifestyle against the results to determine whether the results are realistic (VIA Institute on Character, n.d.).

*The Strong Interest Inventory Assessment* measures four broad areas that assess an individual's interest patterns for compatibility with a range of occupations, education, and leisure activities. The assessment has recently undergone extensive revision to reflect current changes in occupational settings, and is one of the most widely used vocational assessments in the United States. The normative sample consisted of 2,250 employed adults, equally divided by gender, with a 30% non-white representation, consistent with the US Census population statistics. Sample subjects came from 370 occupational fields and the average age of respondents was 35 years old.

The *Strong* assessment has 291 Likert-scale questions covering general occupational themes including realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional based on Holland's RIASEC theory, as well as basic interest scales, occupational scales, and personal style scales. Reliability for test-retest is greater than

.84 for each measure and is considered to have strong validity. This type of assessment will be valuable for group members because it is available online and provides an interpretive profile that identifies career options consistent with interests rather than skills or abilities, and career fit with personality and preferred work environments (CPP, n.d.).

### **Delivery and Leader Credentials**

The group model can be used in a variety of settings including community agencies, counseling settings, career counseling businesses, and colleges or universities. Ideally, the best size for the counseling group will be 6 to 10 members, with two hour sessions conducted over a period of nine weeks. The location of the group needs to be central and convenient for a young adult population.

The facilitator or leader of the group will have a master's degree in psychology, social work or counseling. It will be very helpful for the leader to have a diagnostic background of mental disorders in order to accurately assess member's group appropriateness due to the voluntary nature of the group. For example, an individual with extreme social anxiety will have difficulty participating effectively. Because participants are from the public and are not necessarily referred by mental health professionals, it will be ethically important for the facilitator to know whether an individual is capable of participating in group work. Another important reason for a qualified leader is that participants will need to know the potential for personal risks involved with group counseling, and the facilitator will need to be alert to difficulties that may arise for members that require individual counseling.

The facilitator will need to be competent in multicultural counseling as well as knowledgeable about career development. Because self-efficacy is often made more



complex by familial and cultural backgrounds, the facilitator must be aware of cultural expectations and be sensitive to the challenges of non-mainstream attitudes. It may be possible to adopt an emic approach which is defined by Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2005) as incorporating important aspects of the ethnicities represented. Interventions can be designed that are tailored more to the specific cultural traditions and norms. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2005) contend that in order to adopt an emic approach to counseling multicultural groups, critical factors need to be present in the counseling process. First and foremost is always the therapeutic relationship where trust and rapport are established. Beyond this, the facilitator will encourage the client to relate their own cultural rituals, expectations and interventions in terms of his or her shared worldview (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

It will be best if cultural diversity is addressed early on in the group counseling sessions so that potential barriers to cohesiveness and trust are brought into the open. The initial session will be the time to forge a bond among the group, and the many commonalities that group members share will be important for the leader to bring to awareness including external factors such as the current economic outlook for types of employment.

It will also be important for the leader to reaffirm group norms in the initial session about attendance and promptness, active participation that includes both personal disclosure and giving feedback to other members, listening, and exploring personal concerns about efficacy issues and strength-based practices. An important norm for the group to understand will be to not judge or criticize others, but rather accept and respect each other's individuality. The leader will explain that observations are encouraged

among group members that particularly challenge mistaken beliefs or incongruences about abilities, beliefs and feelings (Corey & Corey, 2006). This sets the stage for the supportive and growth enhancing factors within the interpersonal group style.

### **Program Content**

The program content will be detailed in Chapter Four of this thesis. The program will incorporate self-assessments, group feedback for increased self-knowledge and encouragement, homework assignments, and formulating action plans for future endeavors.

The group's main purpose will be to identify and process areas of confidence that prevent individuals from making satisfying career choices. In addition, individuals will identify their personal strengths and interests, and learn to incorporate these into their daily lives as a way to increase areas of confidence. Finally, group members will spend time searching for career possibilities that fit both their areas of strength as well as how they view themselves in the future.

Within this context, several topics will be explored as the group process evolves. Members will be given instructions to take the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy* scale during the first group session. Both individual and group patterns may emerge for the leader and this will help facilitate specific topics pertinent to the members' needs. The initial topics may take many directions, depending on the assessment results. For instance, it may be helpful to start a discussion about family and cultural influences that are affecting how each individual perceives his or her own career options. Another strategy may be to ask members to think of a type of job they would like to do but don't believe they can, a job that they believe is possible they can do and they would like, and a

third job that they know they can do, but would not like. Each of these can be discussed with the group for the performance attainment aspect, and the rationality of reasons why they are or are not attainable.

Members will be given directions for how to access the *Values In Action-Inventory of Strengths* (VIA-IS) website inventory that will identify their signature strengths, particularly in the areas of work, relationships, values, and activities (Seligman, 2006). Six strength clusters stemming from universal virtues identify signature strengths within the domains of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity and love, justice, temperance, and spirituality (Seligman, 2002). The website gives the user an instant summary of the results, which each member will be asked to print and bring to the next group session. Members will be asked to view their top five strengths and consider whether they are using these strengths in their daily lives and whether they view the results as accurate. Time within sessions will be dedicated to processing the strength-based knowledge and practice, and discussion about values, attitudes, and concerns that arise from the strengths. In addition, practical strategies will be developed for and by each member about how to incorporate the strengths in their daily life. Homework will involve weekly journaling and exercises for the subsequent week's discussion.

A continual topic will be how career self-efficacy can be addressed using one's knowledge of one's signature strengths. This may involve some complex critical thinking skills as well as self-evaluation of values and ability to make changes. The supportive aspect of the group will be very important as members work through incongruence in their past beliefs and their growing self-awareness. The therapeutic

focus of the group at this point will be on present satisfaction and future hopes, optimism and confidence.

The facilitator's knowledge, skills and awareness of diverse populations within the group is essential at this point. With this in mind, it will be important to address self-efficacy in terms of cultural challenges and differences, where particular strengths may hold greater or lesser value. Integrating different formats that can be tailored more directly to individual efficacy and career barriers of group members from diverse backgrounds will be important to bring to the group focus.

The concluding sessions will incorporate exploring career options. Members will be given instructions for accessing career search strategies online and will bring results back to the next group meeting. Further information gathering will involve doing information interviews with outside resources. This may help broaden awareness of career possibilities and is a practical skill needed for the job search process. Open discussion and evaluation will follow where members will give each other feedback as to the degree of fit for career choices and developing self-knowledge. Prior to the last session, group members will take the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale* to measure changes in career self confidence.

### **Costs**

The cost of the program will be dependent on whether the group organizers choose to seek grant funding from stakeholders for financial support of the proposed group. The 12-week group model that meets for 1.5 hours per week will have costs involving location expenses, materials, costs for instruments used, and leader compensation and potential training. These costs must be factored in to the overall

expense of running the group and will vary according to geographic area and access to resources including space, utilities and materials.

### **Promotion and Group Screening**

Promotion will be achieved several ways including utilizing stakeholders who have contact with potential group participants. In addition, advertisement for the group will be in the form of announcements posted in areas that are frequented by young adult populations such as colleges, athletic gyms and community recreation centers, employment agencies, and public transportation areas. Advertisements in newspapers, as well as information disseminated to centers that work with individuals seeking jobs, will also help to reach the emerging adult population. Group members will be expected to pay the program fee after they have completed the screening and orientation for the group.

An announcement (see Appendix A) will start the self-selection process for group members. Interested participants will be interviewed by the group facilitator for their appropriateness to the group. They will be provided with information about goals and purpose of the group, professional disclosure, expectations of group members, confidentiality, and group policy about attendance. Expectations include the interpersonal nature of group counseling, and the importance of completing the assessments as well as homework exercises. Participants will be informed about the expected outcomes of group including the personal growth aspect of the group in relation to career confidence, rather than specific career attainment.

Screening for participants will involve several important areas to ensure group cohesiveness. Individuals with chronic mental illnesses that are not being treated will not

be appropriate for this type of group. Assessment of their functioning will be part of the initial semi-structured interview, re-iterating the importance of the facilitator's counseling background and expertise in diagnosing mental health functioning.

Interested participants will be individually interviewed for a baseline of their self-efficacy beliefs. A sample of the semi-structured interview is available in Appendix B. The interview will include questions about their influences and role models in terms of consideration of careers. They will be questioned about their work and learning experiences, activities they are involved in, interests, and how their current goals relate to performance attainment. These topics address Bandura's self-efficacy theory that our beliefs about our abilities affect our career decision-making process (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005).

The screening interview will ask each participant to self-report areas of strengths and interests. These will be examined for overall confidence level and perception of whether strengths can be enhanced by targeted activities. Participants will be selected based on their openness to exploring confidence concerns, their interest in developing their personal strengths, and their self-reporting of how challenged they are in finding a career path. Corey and Corey (2006) suggest that participants be told if they are not selected for the group based on whether the group is appropriate for their needs. It is ethically important to discuss specific reasons with the potential member so as to avoid harm, and offering alternate suggestions may also help (Corey & Corey, 2006). Providing a referral list to all interested participants for individual psychotherapy and external career resources will be appropriate.

After the screening process, an orientation will occur where participants will be informed about the different assessments they will be taking during the group that will measure self-efficacy and strengths. The assessments will be a guiding point for group topics and the results will help members understand how their career decision-making efficacy has been influenced. Orientation will include the importance of building trust and cohesiveness in the group as paramount for each individual's personal growth and increased confidence in a career direction.

Roles, responsibilities and expectations of the group leader and group members within each session will also be discussed during the orientation process. The leader's role in the group process is to be aware of group dynamics, and continually strive to maintain an environment of safety, trust and hope for members. The leader will provide structure and encourage group cohesion by modeling respect, support and genuine interest in group members and the quality of their interactions (DeLucia-Waack, Gerrity, Kalodner, & Riva, 2004). The leader will share expectations about how the group will work and what she or he hopes members will gain from participating in the group, in this case increased self-efficacy in a possible career direction and greater self-knowledge in terms of developing personal strengths. Group members can share their expectations of the group with the purpose of integrating these into the overall focus, including culturally diverse concerns (Corey & Corey, 2006).

Group members will be informed about their roles and responsibilities. They will be expected to share their reactions and perceptions about self and others honestly and directly, avoid interrupting and having side conversations. Group members will maintain confidentiality outside the group, and limits of confidentiality will be disclosed (Corey &

Corey, 2006). Group members will be expected to attend meetings, be on time, and complete weekly assignments.

### **Evaluation and Accountability**

Evaluation and accountability are enhanced when stakeholders are included in program development. Stakeholders include community members, educators, employers, mental health workers, and career counselors who have an interest in career development and are connected to a young adult population. This model is intended to be utilized at the community level with the support of state and locally funded public service enterprises including adult education and colleges, employment agencies, mental health organizations, and partnership programs such as the United Way who have an interest in building community opportunities and stability. Stakeholders have both an interest in the service provided as well as ability to refer potential clients. Clearly, educating stakeholders on the needs, purpose, goals, content, and evaluation process is a critical component of the planning process. Promotional meetings can be arranged at a convenient central location or at the stakeholders' work sites. Feedback from the stakeholders is best achieved with a cyclical process of refining program goals and objectives, design and evaluation (Astramovich & Coker, 2007). This assures accountability for the program model and increases opportunities for adoption beyond a single community.

Providing specific data to stakeholders that demonstrates outcome effectiveness will be a critical component of the planning process and leads to the evaluation cycle where objectives are created by needs, and evaluations are based on the objectives or goals (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Astramovich and Coker (2007) suggest that it is



beneficial to develop multiple outcomes measures as this increases the validity of the model's effectiveness (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Measurable objectives and outcomes can be based on pre- and post-test scoring differences as well as interviews, surveys, observations, and performance indicators, with both short-term and long-term perspectives. In addition, a timetable for administering assessments is needed in the planning as well as delivery, content, cost, promotion and evaluating the outcomes (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). Promoting and developing a new program in a systematic fashion increases buy-in from organizations in the community who may support financially through grant-giving or as interested stakeholders.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the counseling group will be necessary for both making changes to the group model, and to get a clear understanding of whether the positive psychology, strength-based interventions are viewed as helpful for emerging adults' career self-efficacy. Evaluations will help the facilitator know whether to have a more psycho-educational emphasis in future groups, or whether the therapy/support group model is sufficiently effective for addressing career decision-making concerns. The evaluation survey will be completed at the last group session and can be viewed in Appendix J.

Evaluations will also help the facilitator glean what was most and least valued by the participants, and provide feedback about whether a follow-up group session is desired. At the very least, follow-up can involve a survey in six months that is sent to participants about the lasting effects of the group experience and any subsequent career choices or decisions that members have made. Members who are interested in having

this information shared or getting periodic updates about others' progress may voluntarily participate with formal consent.

Finally, the pre- and post- career self-efficacy measure will give quantitative evidence of the group's effectiveness. This valuable information will not only be beneficial for group members as a demonstration of their own personal growth, but also measure the effectiveness of the strength-based interventions and the interpersonal group counseling process.

The next chapter will outline a design for the Career Counseling Confidence Group. Because of the multitude of concepts and ideas discussed throughout this thesis regarding effective career interventions for the emerging adult with low self-efficacy, it is possible for the psycho-educational group model to take many forms or directions. Although many ideas are worth pursuing, this author will select specific areas to target in order to design a streamlined psycho-educational group proposal.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CAREER CONFIDENCE COUNSELING GROUP DESIGN

The group design proposed for this thesis will emphasize aspects from the literature that focus on turning points, agency and strength promotion. Processing turning points in one's life is a helpful strategy to understand underlying self-efficacy beliefs and gives the opportunity to re-frame for lessons learned, to look for meaning of past events, and to become aware of one's coping strategies. Agency is a method to apply self-knowledge and strength-promotion toward purposeful action in finding a career direction.

The Career Confidence Counseling Group will begin by focusing on self-efficacy beliefs and understanding how low self confidence has developed in relation to specific past performance accomplishments. These will be reviewed as turning points in one's life. Insight is encouraged while trying to understand the meaning of how one has resolved crisis or struggle. This period of exploration will have the purpose of increasing each member's self-identity and to re-frame past experience to a more realistic cognitive perception. The narrative process will allow for de-constructing and then re-constructing one's experiences to more objective personal meaning.

Human agency, or taking action that gives a sense of control over the nature and quality of one's life, will be incorporated as part of growth enhancement. Members will understand and practice using their character strengths with the hope that each will internalize more constructive and helpful ways of thinking about him or herself.

This chapter will be organized by group developmental stages of initial, working and final stages (Corey & Corey, 2006). Within each stage, the group curriculum will be structured as a building process both for psycho-educational topics covered and working together as a group. Specific learning will be attained by understanding self-efficacy and turning points, practicing agency, utilizing one's strengths, and finally exploring career directions.

### **Initial Stage**

Group development begins with the initial stage where it is typical for members to experience anxiety about the group experience. It is important to identify acceptable behaviors for the leader and group members in order to establish safety and trust. Group cohesion is fostered when the focus is on the group as a system, rather than as a collection of individuals, personalities and emotional issues (DeLucia-Waack, Gerrity, Kalodner, & Riva, 2004). Establishing a bond among members by identifying common efficacy challenges as emerging adults is one way to foster group effectiveness. The Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale will provide members with individual efficacy concerns, but will also provide a broader perspective based on the group's overall results in relation to the emerging adult developmental phase.

During the initial stage of group process, norms, expectations, role clarification and decision-making procedures will be re-iterated by the leader with input and any questions from the group. Group members will be expected to treat each other respectfully, accept boundaries, be engaged, and if any areas of challenge develop, have a process for changing what is not working. It will be expected that if there are challenges

within the group, the focus will remain on how the group process can change, rather than specifically blaming any individuals (DeLucia-Waack et al., 2004).

The primary objectives during these initial weeks will be for group members to process past performance experiences in terms of how these have affected their career self-efficacy beliefs. The narrative process will encourage the exploration of meaning-making and identity based on the turning point experiences.

Possible barriers that may emerge relate to gender, cultural background, or limited learning experiences. Low self-efficacy beliefs may be based on low expectations or lack of exposure. Decision-making and the ability to plan may be impacted by low confidence and lack of self-knowledge. Any of these areas of challenge can surface when going through the process of verbalizing and identifying turning points and past experiences.

### **Outline of Each Weekly Meeting**

The following section will outline the goal of each weekly meeting as well as explain the activities and procedures. The group will meet for two hour sessions over a nine week period. Group process will be discussed to show how group members can assimilate their learning by evaluating and making sense of new skills and understanding. Giving and receiving feedback is an essential element of the process and can be reflective or exploratory in nature (Conyne, 1999). Reflections that are on target convey both an understanding of the content of what is being spoken as well as the feeling behind it (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009).

## Week One

Goal – To introduce group members, and to understand group process and begin building cohesion by becoming aware of the group’s commonalities as emerging adults; introduce self-efficacy beliefs.

Activity 1: Introduction of group leader and members.

Procedure – The group leader will describe his or her background and experience with career counseling and group leadership. The leader will explain his or her role as facilitator, not expert, and will provide a general overview of how the group will be structured with both content activities and practice, and time for group members to process what they are learning and understanding. The leader will re-iterate the importance of confidentiality and its limits, and review group norms and expectations. The leader will explain that each session will have a specific goal that members can expect to learn, and there will be time given to practice new behaviors and ways of thinking, where feedback from each other will enhance the process. The nature of the group will emanate from their common developmental needs as emerging adults seeking career direction and adopting a more realistic view of him or herself as a capable adult.

For the purpose of modeling and building trust, the group leader will then describe a strength that he or she believes is inherent in him or herself, and a way in which this strength is used in his or her work. The leader will ask each member to introduce him or herself and share with the group a strength he or she sees in him or herself. This activity sets the stage for strength-promotion as a critical aspect of each individual’s abilities as well as its application in life and career.

Activity 2: What does it mean to be an adult? The purpose of this activity is to enhance members' awareness of their common experiences, expectations and challenges as emerging adults.

Procedure – Each member will identify two adjectives that describe adulthood, such as independence and maturity, and explain to the group how he or she views him or herself in terms of these self-identified markers for adulthood. The group leader can write the responses on a poster board or white board.

Process – Discussion will involve reviewing the collective markers determined by the group and each individual's sense of where he or she is in his or her development. The leader will briefly educate the group about research on the emerging adult developmental age, particularly attainment of making independent decisions, financial independence, and accepting responsibility for oneself. These areas will be processed by comparing the group results and understanding how they fit in with the evidence from research.

It will be important to incorporate cultural background and social influences during this activity and the leader will encourage members to view how much they have in common. The leader's knowledge of cultural background will be helpful to ask specific questions that will draw out cultural influences. For example, if one member shares that moving away from home is a marker for adulthood, the leader will want to ask the individual if the idea is based on his or her particular family background and expectations. The leader will want to ask if others in the group have similar or different family expectations.

Activity 3: Mindfulness Exercise: The group leader will introduce this activity at the end of the first session explaining that this same activity will be incorporated in each of the next sessions. Relaxation by using mindfulness is a centering experience that can help everyone temporarily put aside the outside world and focus on attending to the present work inside the group. Further, mindfulness exercises can be practiced outside of group as a way to alleviate anxiety, stress or feelings of negativity (Torney, 2006).

Procedure – There are many short mindfulness exercises that can be incorporated in group sessions. One is a diaphragmatic breathing exercise. The group leader can guide the group by asking members to sit in a comfortable position and close or semi-close their eyes. The leader will ask members to begin to pay attention to their breathing. He or she will suggest that they breathe as if they want to fill up their belly, not just their lungs. The leader will state that attention to breathing is the focus of the exercise, but it is natural for thoughts to wander. When this happens, label the thought in terms of ‘planning’ or ‘remembering’, so as to not elaborate on the thought. Rather, return your attention to your breathing and simply notice your spontaneous thoughts in a detached manner (Torney, 2006). This exercise can be incorporated both at the beginning and end of group as a way to frame the start and finish. In this group design, the exercise will be repeated at the start of each session.

Homework – Members will be given instructions to complete the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale available online. The group leader will explain that the self-efficacy results will help members to target specific areas of challenge, both internal and external, that can be addressed in group.



Some members may have difficulty completing homework especially if their history is to not follow through with assignments. If this is the case, it will be important for the group leader to discuss homework challenges with the group. The expectation is that everyone will follow through with homework, so it will be useful to remind members that to do so helps develop skills for career success. If the problem continues, the group leader will want to notice and challenge the lack of homework engagement as a group discussion.

### Week Two

#### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal – The goal for this session will be to review results of *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale*, identify specific self-confidence barriers, and to relate self-efficacy beliefs to self-identity and career exploration.

Procedure – The group leader will write on a board: What is self-efficacy and how is this related to finding a career path? He or she will define self-efficacy to the group and how the theoretical concept can prescribe challenges in finding a career path using data described earlier in this thesis. The leader will explain that self-efficacy concerns stem from lack of confidence to do certain tasks. Further, self-limiting beliefs act as a block to take action. The leader will inform the group that the next sessions will be dedicated to understanding how one's confidence in career seeking has evolved and finding ways to overcome areas of challenge.

Activity 1: Each group member will be asked to share his or her results of the assessment. Group members will ask each other questions about the results emphasizing both the cognitive and emotional meaning for the individual. Clarifying skills can be

modeled by asking questions to gather more information or to summarize key issues that the listener is hearing in the speaker's statements (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009). The group leader will list the following questions on the board and ask each member to spend a few minutes considering how they might answer the questions.

- What are the areas that show my low self-efficacy beliefs?
- Does this make sense in terms of work experiences I have had or have stopped me from having?
- What prevents me from believing I can do (the self-efficacy attribute)?
- In what ways do I agree/disagree with the results?
- What does this tell me about myself?
- How does this knowledge affect my career confidence?
- Is the result based on negative thinking; how can I re-frame to be more positive?

Process – Group members will voluntarily share their self-efficacy results and describe how they answered each question. Processing will occur as group members ask more probing questions, and help each other re-frame negative thoughts to more positive ones. The group leader can model the process.

As an example, a member with low self-efficacy in interviewing skills may say: My lack of confidence when being interviewed is because I worry that I am being judged and this makes me feel anxious. It is hard for me to believe that the interviewer is interested in me and wants to get to know me.

Processing will involve how one can improve his or her interviewing skills and decrease anxiety about being judged. Suggestions from group members and the leader

may be to learn and practice interviewing techniques, to change negative self-talk, and for the member to become aware of what he or she feels physically when feeling anxious followed by some relaxation strategies. Anxiety management is a common challenge for many career seekers, so this may emerge as a key confidence barrier for most of the group members. Relaxation strategies such as a mindfulness exercise or self-affirmations, and role plays practiced in later sessions will be beneficial exercises for all of the members and another area where participants can assist each other.

Activity 2: The purpose of this activity will be to view past performance accomplishments in terms of members' worldview and social influences. Group members will process a past experience for comparison between how he or she views the event with how a family member or influential friend would view it. The leader will want to instruct group members to not focus on their behavior but rather to consider the meaning of the experience.

Procedure – In pairs, choose an area of low self-efficacy on the scale, and describe a memory of a past performance experience that may relate to the area of low self-efficacy. How would your parent or close relative view the event? Is this different than your view; why or why not?

Process – Members will begin the process of considering the meaning of past performance accomplishments in terms of familial and cultural influences and how these may be impacting one's identity. McLean and Pratt (2006) contend that emerging adults who narrate their own decision-making experience as separate from the "voices" of their parents were able to have more sophisticated personal meaning around the event. In

terms of career development, this leads to more advanced identity formation (McLean & Pratt, 2006).

An example of this is a 23 year old man who shares his past performance experience, and he has an identified low self-efficacy area of accurately assessing his abilities. He explains that he was hired to be a case manager for a community health center. He worked for one month then abruptly quit and never returned to the job. He describes his dissatisfaction by stating that the job had too much paperwork and he felt that he could not help the clients. His parents' view was that it was a woman's job and it also did not pay well. He explains that his parents hope he will get a job in sales. The group can process this for meaning by noticing that his parents' "voice" may have been influencing his ability to find satisfaction in a human service field, a traditional female-gendered occupation, and how he was conflictual about committing to on-the-job training. He can evaluate this in terms of his own values and view of the work environment.

At the end of the session, the leader can summarize how self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by many factors and that growing awareness of confidence barriers helps to overcome low self-efficacy. The leader will explain that the next session will be dedicated to re-framing past events for meaning so that each member can gain insight into how to change self-limiting beliefs.

## Week Three

### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal – Using a narrative approach, members will identify and reframe past performance experiences as turning points to gain greater personal meaning. Turning points will be described as events that lead to substantial change.

Activity 1: In dyads, group members will explain their self-efficacy beliefs in terms of specific personal experience. Members may use the same past experience from last week's activity or choose a different one. The listener will ask questions such as:

- What was the most difficult and most successful part of the experience?
- What might be influencing the negative belief?
- How did you or could you overcome the challenge?
- What meaning can you derive out of the experience?
- What did you learn about yourself that was new?
- Looking back, how might you choose to change the outcome?
- What are other paths you could have chosen?

Process – Group feedback will follow when the dyads return to the larger group to relay the outcome of the dyads. Group members will help each other with re-framing and further explore past experiences in terms of changing attitudes, beliefs and values. Dyad members will share whether the other was able to relay his or her stories and meaning in an optimistic or positive manner. This step is a way for members to help each other with understanding how to overcome barriers and bring to awareness cognitive distortions that may be focusing on lack of success. The leader will ask the group to process the question

of how does finding meaning in past experiences help one to feel more optimistic about making future choices, being independent and finding your own identity?

Homework – The group leader will explain the next phase of group work which will focus on learning about one’s character strengths, practicing ways to use them, and being aware of flow experiences that may help identify career direction. Group members will be asked to complete the *Values In Action – Strengths Inventory* VIA-SI online, and to bring the results to the next meeting.

### **Working Stage**

It is common in group development that this next phase is marked with struggles of power and competition. When group members are able to resolve conflicts with the leader and each other, a greater sense of trust and cohesion develops. During this phase of the group, it is helpful to clarify common goals and values in order to increase group stability (DeLucia-Waack et al., 2004). It will be helpful for the leader to check in with members about the group experience so far. If conflicts arise, members can negotiate solutions as a group and decide how to make any changes in goals, roles, and group structure. As the group norm is to respect and be positive with each other, this will be the expected attitude during any negotiation.

Corey and Corey (2006) purport that during the working stage, group cohesion is high when members bond emotionally based on identifying with each other’s experiences, and support one another’s efforts to take risks with new behaviors. Ideally members will feel hopeful about the possibility of constructive change and have a sense of inclusion with other group members. Corey and Corey (2006) state a primary characteristic of a cohesive group is one that encourages action-oriented behaviors

especially giving and receiving feedback, feeling safe to take risks in sharing about oneself, and taking action on insights gained (Corey & Corey, 2006). The group leader will want to check in with group members during this stage to ensure that conflicts or negative reactions are expressed openly and discussed in terms of constructive solutions. Interventions for spontaneously “clearing the air” may be needed during the working phase, and group members may need to be encouraged to talk directly about what they are experiencing in the here-and-now, without needing permission to speak from the leader (Conyne, 1999). A method the leader can use to increase involvement and spontaneity is to do a round with the group. This is especially helpful when one person is dominating the conversation and others seem to be losing interest. The leader can say, “Let me stop you here, and let’s get everyone’s thoughts on this topic” (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009, p. 191).

The primary purpose during the next three sessions will be to practice using strengths, to identify experiences of flow, and to develop self-efficacy beliefs in terms of career human agency. Personal meaning and life goals, motivation, and values will be explored while taking specific actions that are consistent with one’s personal strengths. The emphasis for group processing will be on how one thinks and acts (Chen, 2006), and to gain insight into how positive change and personal attitude can lead to being motivated to take action.

In terms of career exploration, taking action that is purposeful and intentional may lead to better career outcomes and self-knowledge. An action incorporates career direction that is clear and well-defined (Chen, 2006). Effectively utilizing one’s personal strengths may help to understand his or herself better and optimize career exploration.

## Week Four

### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal – Group members will identify signature strengths and ways to practice them daily.

Procedure – A handout will be given with descriptions of each character strength (see Appendix C). Group members will review strengths in terms of previously processed past performance accomplishments, meaning and identity exploration. Each member will be asked to identify situations in which a signature strength has helped or may have helped one's emotional state and one's confidence level. Each member will be asked to identify specific, concrete and achievable behaviors and actions that will cultivate and encourage use of signature strengths in work, life and relationships.

Activity 1: Each group member will share the top five signature strengths from the *Values in Action* survey. Members will be asked to explain whether they agree or disagree by answering the question, "Is this the real me?" They will be asked to consider how they are already using any of the strengths in their life. For further enlightenment and to encourage social persuasion, members can try to explain how and when they see other members using their strengths. Members will work together to clarify the results and discuss why it is helpful to know their strengths and how this knowledge can be applied for making a career choice.

Process – The leader will ask questions such as whether the findings are consistent with past performance and meaning of turning points. How can group members use their strengths more in daily life? Group members may break off in to



groups of two or three to discuss what feelings have come up for them regarding their strengths and to come up with specific ways to practice daily.

Following are some examples of signature strengths and how they can be used in daily exercises.

1. A signature strength of creativity implies that a person can come up with ideas that are original and useful. Exercising creativity requires being able to complete a task or project. In order to cultivate this strength, it is helpful to not feel pressured by time or judged by others. Working and living in a supportive, open and casual environment fosters more positive emotions that lead to greater original and creative ideas. In order to practice this strength, homework will involve doing something that can put one in a happy and relaxed mood, use positive self-affirmations in order to avoid a feeling of criticism or judgment, and to try not to feel pressured by time. Then one can begin a project or develop an idea that is interesting or important to him or her (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.).

2. A signature strength of kindness implies that having empathy and taking action for the benefit of others increases one's positive emotion. In order to practice this strength, some examples of exercises that may be undertaken include doing something for someone else that requires time and effort; one day each week, commit five random acts of kindness, and if possible keep them anonymous; listen to a friend by asking how his or her day was, and respond before describing one's own day. Keep a journal of kindness acts and describe positive feelings that arise (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.).

3. A signature strength of persistence implies the individual will continue with a task no matter how difficult the obstacles are for completion. In order to be

persistent, the individual needs to have the self-confidence to believe that he or she is competent and able to complete the challenge. The feeling of competence is more likely to be experienced when the reward is recognized by positive feedback thereby increasing one's intrinsic motivation to persist. Exercises to utilize the strength of persistence include finishing a project ahead of time; using a time management aid such as a palm pilot or daily planner; setting a goal and making a plan to complete it; and making a daily to-do list making sure to get the list done (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.).

Homework – The leader will explain that cultivating one's character strengths is a way to build confidence and gain self-knowledge. Members will be asked to keep a journal log of how they are practicing 1-3 strengths daily, and to reflect on how they feel. They will be asked to review their top 5 strengths from the VIA-SI results. They can either use the journal log provided in Appendix D or write in their own personal notebook. Appendix E is a handout to record self-efficacy results and signature strengths. If members choose, they can all practice increasing their attitudes of gratitude by writing three good things that happen every day giving an explanation of why they happened. Positive psychologists purport that becoming more grateful and appreciative has positive effects on mood, relationships and overall life perspective (VIA Institute on Character, n.d.).

### Week Five

#### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal: The goal of this session will be to understand the concept of flow and how using signature strengths can lead to flow experience. Members will relate flow experiences to interests and skills and use this to identify potential career directions.

Activity 1 – This activity will be repeated in each of the remaining sessions:

Review and share experiences from practicing using character strengths. Group members will describe actions and emotional reactions. Feedback from group members will emphasize framing in positive, affirming language. Further ideas and customizing exercises will be encouraged.

Activity 2: The group leader will introduce the concept of flow and how this relates to career direction. Flow is experienced when one is so absorbed in an activity that he or she loses sense of time and effort expended. When an activity is too simple, we get bored easily; when it is too difficult, our anxiety is increased (Belsky, 2007). The group leader will describe his or her own flow experiences and ask group members to share theirs. Examples of flow experiences may be losing oneself in the process of writing poetry, doing a favorite activity or exercise, putting together a puzzle, or creating a new recipe. The group leader will describe how flow experience helps to identify innate talents and interests, and will ask group members what they can learn about themselves. Together the group will generate ideas for how strengths and flow may be useful in different types of work.

Process – Focused discussion where members will work to identify the qualities of flow experience and how they can be applied in a work setting. For example, someone who achieves flow when he or she is engaged in a lively discussion about music also has a signature strength of vitality. Vitality is defined as someone who approaches life as an adventure, exuding excitement and energy (VIA Institute on Character, n.d.). How can this be applied to a work setting? The leader can suggest that the energy and vitality can be channeled in a more direct way toward getting involved or developing a passion.

Because lively conversation in a topic of interest achieves flow, a work setting that involves working with others to plan and problem-solve will be desirable. The task for the group will be to tease out each other's areas of interest while maximizing the use of strengths.

Homework – Members will be given instructions to complete the *Strong Interest Inventory* and to bring the career interest profile results to the next session. They will be reminded to continue using their strengths daily and use the journal log to track use and emotional response.

### **Final Stage**

The next three sessions leading to the final group meeting will focus on career assessment and taking purposeful action towards searching for a desirable career. The final stage of the psycho-educational group will involve putting together newly acquired self-knowledge with attaining the skills necessary to move forward in a career direction. Corey and Corey (2006) state that the final stage of a group is a time to combine what has been learned with strategies about how they will move forward after the group is ended. Members will have shared a great deal about themselves to each other, so there may be a sense of loss or separation which needs to be recognized and processed. Members are encouraged to use their new skills both within and outside the group and to report on how successful the experiences are (Corey & Corey, 2006).

### **Week Six**

#### **Mindfulness Exercise**

Goal – Review and process results of the *Strong Interest Inventory Assessment*. Identify two possible career directions based on assessment results and degree of fit;

identify self-efficacy beliefs of the suggested career paths; and identify ways to take action for information gathering.

Activity 1: Review use of signature strengths and feelings of flow. Check-in with each group member about use of strengths, emotional and cognitive reactions, and any new insights about him or herself. The group will continue to provide feedback using positively stated affirmations and encouragement.

It may be helpful to do a “behind the curtain” activity if group members are having difficulty sharing what they are noticing in each other. In this activity, one member metaphorically goes behind a curtain while the rest of the group discusses what they notice about the individual, changes, areas of challenge, and strengths. The individual “behind the curtain” is not allowed to respond, only listen to what others are observing. This can be helpful to gain insight about how one’s behavior and attitude affects others, can help to reframe, and is a good listening exercise. Once completed, the leader will ask the individual “behind the curtain” what he or she learned and felt during the exercise. The other group members can offer similar thoughts and feelings about the experience.

Activity 2: Members will share with each other the results of the *Strong Interest Inventory*. They will each have a summary profile of their interests as they relate to types of occupations. Members will share the types of jobs that come up and explore ideas for learning more about this type of work.

Process – The group leader will start the discussion by writing on a white board or poster board the interest type results of all the members. The leader will briefly explain the differences between Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and

Conventional. A handout will be provided to members and can be viewed in Appendix F. Members can ask questions and give ideas for further clarification of each theme. Each member will be asked to note how these compare with his or her signature strengths and discussion may follow about similarities and differences. Once interest themes are understood, members will review their occupational scales and work interest results. Members will be asked whether they have considered any of the suggested careers before to glean information about self-efficacy in these areas. Finally, the practical application of gathering more information will be considered.

As a guide for this activity, an example follows: an individual with a high interest in conventional occupational themes also has a signature strength of persistence. Persistence relates to the ability for attention to detail and efficiency. As the work interest results from the *Strong Interest Inventory* show high scores in areas of office management, finance and investing, the individual can have confidence that this is most likely a suitable career direction. Discussion can revolve around whether this career is something the individual believes he or she can really do. The self-efficacy aspect will generate ideas about the individual's reasoning, self-appraisal, and knowledge of past experiences. Discussion among members can involve feedback and re-framing about how the different scores relate to the self-knowledge that each member has gained about his or her strengths, abilities and preferences.

Activity 3 and Homework: The group leader will guide group members through the process of gathering more information and putting together an action plan. Suggestions such as social networking; informational interviews and job shadowing; and locating community educational and career resources will all be offered. The group will

work together to brainstorm ideas for taking action on information gathering. Group members will be given a handout for homework that provides a timetable for career searching and can be viewed in Appendix G. The group leader will ask members to consider what personal and external challenges they believe may get in the way of following through on taking action toward finding a career. These challenges, and ways to overcome them, will be the basis for next week's session.

### Week Seven

#### Mindfulness Exercise

During this session, the leader will want to remind members to prepare for the group ending in two weeks. The leader will want to ask members to think about how they want to maximize their learning in the next sessions (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009).

Goal – Group members will process internal and external barriers to taking action and will practice specific skills in preparation for forming an action plan in the next session.

Activity 1: Brief check-in with members about their experiences using their signature strengths during the past week. Group members can share whether they have noticed changes in any relationships or in how they approach activities. The leader can ask for a volunteer to read from their journal log to share a personal experience.

Activity 2: Group members will review their self-efficacy beliefs from earlier sessions that may have limited their career confidence. At this stage, members should have a strong foundation of what their signature strengths are and be able to relate these to suitable career directions guided by the *Strong Interest Inventory* results. However, as

action plans are being formulated, areas of low self-efficacy may still be present in the job search process. The next two sessions will address these areas by practicing specific skills that will target increasing confidence in career attainment.

Examples of continual low self-efficacy present in the group may be concerns such as finding information about occupations, creating a plan based on goals for the next five years, accurately assessing one's abilities, effective problem-solving, or talking to a person already in the field. Overcoming such obstacles requires processing the hurdles, and breaking down the action to smaller steps to make it seem less daunting. The underlying cause of low self-efficacy may be stress, anxiety, or mistaken beliefs and through focused discussion, these can be verbalized and addressed as a group.

Procedure – Members will identify a common topic to explore in greater detail to move forward in career planning and to take action to overcome barriers. Topics may include making a plan of goals for the next five years; deciding what one values most in an occupation; talking with a person already employed in the field; overcoming anxiety about interviewing skills; and figuring out what one is ready to sacrifice in order to achieve career goals.

The group leader can offer suggestions to improve self-efficacy including the importance of vicarious experiences, where it is helpful to align oneself with another as a model for building confidence to improve one's own performance. Another suggestion is to break a large task down to smaller steps which will increase the potential for success. Further, problem-solving strategies will help to come up with multiple solutions that can be weighed for advantages and disadvantages, then an action plan can be formulated using the best solution. Finally, stress and anxiety management can be



alleviated in many ways, including better organizational skills as well as relaxation strategies, and the group can brainstorm ideas that can be evaluated for each person's preference and needs. Each of these areas can form the basis for this activity where the group leader will instruct and model as the group processes effectiveness.

Addressing low self-efficacy belief in interviewing skills is often a practical activity in career counseling, so this activity will be described in detail. The leader can teach specific skills needed for successful interviewing including effective listening, using eye contact, and asking questions. The group can brainstorm ideas, and the leader can model specific skill-building and communication strategies. The activity can progress to asking for two members to volunteer to role play an interview situation. The group together can create the work setting and the type of job for the role play incorporating job interests from the *Strong Interest Inventory*. The group will then give feedback and process the experience together.

Samples of interview questions for role play:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- Describe a difficult work situation or project and how you overcame it.
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What are your goals for the next 5 years?
- How do you plan to achieve these goals?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What motivates you?

- If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?
- How will you use your strengths in this position?

Process – The group members in the role play will process the interview experience both for emotional and cognitive reactions. Processing will include such topics as how it felt to sit in their respective positions as interviewer and interviewee. What was the most challenging question to answer; why? Group members and leader will provide feedback to both positions in terms of body language, verbal communication, and overall sense of confidence. Additional role-plays can follow.

### Week Eight

#### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal – To formulate an action plan for career search with a long term goal, short term goals, potential obstacles and targeted solutions.

Activity 1: The group leader will distribute Action Plan Sheets to members that can be viewed in Appendix H and the Career Interest Results summary sheet in Appendix I. It will be helpful for the leader to have a power point presentation display to complete this activity. The leader will model how to use the Action Plan using the group's input to complete. The plan starts by identifying a long term goal that is a broad statement with a given timeframe. The short-term goals are more specific and measurable and state a specific action that can be completed. An example of an Action Plan with possible responses is provided below.

## Action Plan

**Long Term Goal:** *Find a career that is satisfying to me within six months.*

**Short Term Goal #1:** *To identify 2-3 businesses or individuals to contact that are within my interest domains.*

Time Frame: *Within one week.*

Procedure:

1. *Check out local newspapers, online career websites, local employment office, trade journals, and visit area college career centers for specific names. If possible, attend a job fair.*
2. *Network with friends, family, teachers, and acquaintances to learn more about careers of interest. Ask others if they know of anyone in a specific career that you can contact.*
3. *Research job requirements including training, education, and job skills. Use library and career centers as resources for attaining information.*
4. *Make contact to ask about job shadowing for a day or for an informational interview.*

Obstacle: *I don't know if I have enough experience.*

Solution: *Find out about entry level requirements; consider how your strengths, skills and interests can be transferable to the specific job; consider whether you need further training or experience and think about whether you want to commit to this.*

Obstacle: *How do I decide which businesses to contact?*

Solution: *Utilize decision-making steps such as considering pros and cons of each career based on what's important to you including values, skills, interests, as well as training, location and salary. Make your selection based on what seems the best fit for you. Once you've made contact, re-evaluate and choose alternatives if needed.*

**Short-Term Goal #2:** *To prepare a resume and general cover letter; and identify others for letters of recommendation.*

Time Frame: *Within two weeks.*

Procedure:

1. *Write a resume and cover letter expressing your interest in specific fields.*
2. *Consider who knows you well either personally (but not related to you) and professionally that could write a recommendation letter for you.*

Obstacle: *I don't know how to write a resume or cover letter.*

Solution: *Follow procedures outlined on several career websites; utilize your networking resources to review your resume and cover letter for feedback.*

Obstacle: *I don't know who to ask for recommendations.*

Solution: *Consider past employers, teachers, or professional family friends who would be able to describe your character as well as your abilities. Provide the individual with copies of any job descriptions as well as your resume; and inform him or her of particular points that may be relevant for a particular job.*

**Short-Term Goal #3:** *To apply for specific jobs and/or to decide to further my practical experience through education or training.*

Time Frame: *Within one month.*

Procedure:

1. *Following informational interviews and job shadowing, determine what I need to embark on the career path that interests me.*
2. *Either apply for a position using resume, cover letter, letters of recommendation and start preparing for interviews; or search for education and training that will lead to employment.*

Obstacle: *I don't know if I can afford to go back to school.*

Solution: *Research costs of training and education using online sources, local colleges, and be sure to find out if training is provided by companies or businesses. Find out about volunteering or interning as a first step to get practical experience in the field.*

This activity will most likely generate much discussion and questions about how to proceed in the career search process. It will be important for group members to learn from each other and for the leader to pay attention to obstacles that emerge. These obstacles and solutions can be addressed again in the next and final session.

Activity 2: How far have you come? The purpose of this activity will be for members to view their own growth since starting the group. Everyone can stand up in a line next to each other. The leader will explain there's an imaginary line from one wall to the other. The right wall represents feeling extremely confident about finding a suitable

career path, and the left wall represents feeling no confidence about finding a career path. Members will position themselves where they believe they have progressed on the continuum. Discussion will follow about what insights about themselves and others they get from doing this activity (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009).

Homework – Formulate your action plan for the next session. Carefully consider your timeline and begin to work on the action of attaining more information. Time will be spent in the next session reviewing the process. Members will be given instructions to take the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale* as a post-test measure of their self-efficacy. Members will be reminded to continue practicing and recording their character strengths daily.

### Week Nine

#### Mindfulness Exercise

Goal: The goal for this final session will be to assess individual action plans and timelines for measurable attainment, as well as possible obstacles and practical solutions. The final hour of the session, members will summarize the group experience and share changes and learning they have made.

Activity 1: In groups of two or three, members will review their action plans with each other, and let others know what they have learned about a specific career area. One member will take notes and relay the information back to the whole group. Any particular areas of challenge will be discussed by all as well as ideas to overcome the challenge. Members can spend time revising their action plans.

Activity 2: Focused discussion on accurate self-appraisal and summarizing the group experience. The group leader can begin by summarizing the building blocks of

learning that the group has experienced starting with finding meaning in turning point events, practicing daily character strengths and being aware of the impact of these experiences, understanding self-efficacy beliefs in terms of self-view and world-view, and applying this knowledge to formulate a career action plan. The leader can share observations he or she has noticed about the overall group learning and individual changes.

Members will each spend a few minutes sharing with the group if and how they have changed since starting the group. They can include the comparison of results of the post-test of the *Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale*. Reactions may be both emotional and cognitive as individuals share their insights, hopes and frustrations about growing confidence and what they have learned from each other. Members can offer support and encouragement by sharing their own observations about how others have changed or grown.

Activity 3: This final activity will give time for evaluation and formal termination of the group. A sample evaluation can be found in Appendix J. Members may ask for a follow-up session in a few months to re-connect about where they are in their career search process. Members may also choose to keep in touch with each other outside the group. Finally, as a closing exercise, the group leader and members are encouraged to make a gratitude statement about the group experience.

### **Summary**

By participating in this group, emerging adults will have an opportunity to examine their thoughts and feelings about their self-doubts, influences and experiences in relation to finding a suitable career. The group setting encourages growth and positive

reinforcement for changing attitudes and taking risks. Group members will come away with practical tools for continuing in a career direction. These tools are enhanced by greater self-knowledge of what he or she does well and enjoys, forming the foundation for raising self-efficacy about success in a career path and becoming a self-reliant adult.

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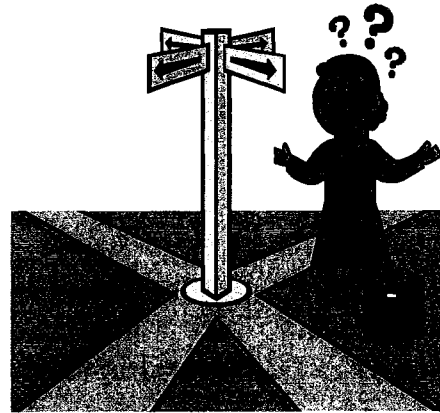
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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A



1. Are you between the ages of 18 and 26?
2. Do you draw a blank when you think about a career path?
3. Do you wonder what you will be doing in the next 5-10 years?
4. Do you question what you are good at doing?
5. Are you interested in your own personal growth?

*If you answered YES to these questions, and you are interested in exploring your personal strengths and building confidence in choosing a career direction, you may benefit from joining the Career Confidence Counseling Group.*

*For more information, contact Ann at The Career Counseling Agency at 555-1212.*

## APPENDIX B

### **Semi-Structured Group Screening Interview**

- Do you have any particular career interests?
- Have you had work experience in this area?
- What types of work have you done?
- What have you liked/not liked about the jobs?
- Did you have any particular interests/successes in school?
- How would you rate your confidence for getting a job you really enjoy and that you know you can be good at doing?
- Is there anything preventing you from getting this type of ideal job?
- Do you know what jobs and careers are available?
- How would you find out?
- Do you feel that you are ready to start a career? Why or why not?
- What are your strengths? Do you want to improve your strengths?
- How might you use these in a career or in finding a career?
- How might you practice ways to enhance your strengths?
- Do you feel pressure, encouragement, or discouragement from your family and/or friends to pursue or avoid certain types of work?
- How does this affect you?
- How would you describe yourself to a new acquaintance? To a future employer?
- What might prevent you from participating while in the group?
- Do you have any particular concerns or worries about being in a group?

## APPENDIX C

### Character Strengths and Exercises

1. Wisdom and Knowledge – the virtue of acquiring and using knowledge
  - a. Creativity – the ability to find unique and original ways to do things including artistic endeavors.
  - b. Curiosity – exploring and discovering new experiences and information; openness to and fascination of new subjects.
  - c. Open-mindedness – Viewing and thinking of things from all sides; able to change one’s mind based on persuasive evidence; not judging or jumping to conclusions.
  - d. Love of learning – Ability to take what one already knows and go beyond this to master new skills and knowledge.
  - e. Perspective (wisdom) – ability to make sense of the world and situations to self and others.
  
2. Courage – the virtue of facing fear, danger or opposition to achieve or accomplish goals.
  - a. Bravery – Not shrinking from a threat; standing up to opposition even if there is potential for physical harm.
  - b. Persistence – Completing tasks by persevering despite obstacles.
  - c. Integrity – Being genuine and taking responsibility in a truthful and sincere way.
  - d. Vitality – Enthusiasm for life; energetic
  
3. Humanity – the virtue of interpersonal valuing of human beings.
  - a. Love – Valuing sharing and caring relationships with others that is reciprocated.
  - b. Kindness – Taking care of others; doing favors and good deeds for others; being nurturing, compassionate and generous.
  - c. Social intelligence (also known as emotional intelligence) – Understanding what makes others’ tick; having an awareness of what motivates others and being attuned to feelings of others.
  
4. Justice – the virtue of being civic-minded to ensure healthy quality of life.
  - a. Citizenship – Being socially responsible in the sense of doing one’s share; working well as a team or group member.
  - b. Fairness – Being able to give everyone a fair chance and treat everyone the same; not be influenced by bias or prejudice.
  - c. Leadership – Ability to organize others for a goal or purpose; encouraging others to get things done while maintaining a good relationship.

5. Temperance – the virtue that protects against excess.
  - a. Forgiveness and mercy – Giving people a second chance; accepted others for who they are despite shortcomings; forgiving those who have done wrong.
  - b. Humility and modesty – Not seeking recognition for accomplishments but let actions speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as special.
  - c. Prudence – Being careful about the choices one makes; not taking undue risks; careful to evaluate actions before taking them in order to eliminate regret.
  - d. Self-regulation or self-control – Self-disciplined; controlling and regulating one’s emotions and actions.
  
6. Transcendence – the virtue of connecting oneself to a larger entity such as the universe or human population and finding meaning in this connection.
  - a. Appreciation of beauty and excellence – Noticing and appreciating beauty in nature, art, science and other aspects of everyday human life.
  - b. Gratitude – Expressing thankfulness; being aware of and appreciating good things that happen.
  - c. Hope – Believing that a good future is possible and working to achieve the best in the future; optimistic.
  - d. Humor -- Playfulness; enjoying laughing and smiling and seeing others do the same; seeing the light side; making jokes.
  - e. Spirituality – Having beliefs or faith about the meaning of life that shapes one’s behavior and provides comfort; knowing where one fits in with the larger scheme.

Adapted from VIA Institute on Character., (n.d.).



APPENDIX D

**Signature Strength Home Practice Log**

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity using strength

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Observations

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Observations about effect on your confidence level

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Strength \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity using strength

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Observations

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Observations about effect on your confidence level

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Strength \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity using strength

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Observations

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Observations about effect on your confidence level

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## APPENDIX E

### **Self-Efficacy Beliefs**

Record the self-efficacy beliefs resulting from the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale.

Highest scores:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lowest scores:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Signature Strengths**

Record the top 5 signature strengths identified by *Values In Action* survey. Circle the two you choose to practice daily during the group program.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## APPENDIX F

### **Descriptions of RIASEC Occupational Themes**

**Realistic** – This occupational theme suits individuals who are adept at manual activities usually involving machinery or manipulation of objects. Physical coordination and dexterity often mark the realistic type. Personality types associated with realistic occupations are often described as practical, persistent and have common sense. Realistic individuals gravitate toward occupations in skilled or technical trades including operating equipment, building computers, and athletics.

**Investigative** – This occupational theme suits individuals who prefer observing, researching and analyzing objects of interest such as nature, science or culture. Investigative types are often not viewed as leaders or social extroverts. Their competencies are in the areas of critical thinking, independence, and curiosity about how things work and why they work as they do. Investigative occupations often involve research, science, medicine, and technical pursuits.

**Artistic** – This occupational theme suits individuals who are imaginative and introspective, generally appreciate uniqueness in form, enjoy creating something new, and appreciate writing, art and music. Artistic types are often expressive and original, and have a less ordered, systematic or conforming style than others. Artistic occupations include composers, writers, decorators, and actors.

**Social** – This occupational theme suits individuals who prefer people-oriented activities rather than mechanical or scientific activities. Social types are competent in human relations and interactions and are more likely to be understanding, kind and sympathetic in nature. Their interests tend to lie in teamwork activities, community service and caring for people. Generally social types have good verbal ability and people skills. Social occupations include teachers, counselors, and religious workers.

**Enterprising** – This occupational theme suits individuals who prefer to consider ways to enhance organization or seek potential economic gain. Being extroverted, adventurous, and ambitious often are attributes of the enterprising type. Leadership and entrepreneurship are enterprising qualities. Enterprising occupations include sales, managerial positions, politics, and marketing.

**Conventional** – This occupational theme suits individuals who prefer ordered, systematic, and unambiguous activities. Conventional types are usually more practical and conforming, and less interested in being imaginative. Accuracy to detail, efficiency and organizing are typical competencies of the conventional type of individual. Conventional occupations include clerical work, accounting, data analysis, investing, and information technology.

Adapted from Career Development Interventions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005.

APPENDIX G

**Career Search Progress**

**Action 1**

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Progress \_\_\_\_\_

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Next Steps \_\_\_\_\_

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**Action 2** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Progress \_\_\_\_\_

Next Steps \_\_\_\_\_

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**Action 3** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Progress \_\_\_\_\_

Next Steps \_\_\_\_\_

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**Action 4** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Progress \_\_\_\_\_

Next Steps \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX H

**Action Plan**

**Long Term Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Short Term Goal #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Time Frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure:

- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

**Short-Term Goal #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Time Frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure:

- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

**Short-Term Goal #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Time Frame: \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure:

- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_

Obstacle: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX I

### Career Interest Results

List your top 5 interest areas from *Strong Interest Inventory Assessment*:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List your top 10 occupations identified on the assessment:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

List your top 5 personal style preferences:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Choose 2 occupations you are most interested in learning more about:

- 1.
- 2.

Sources for finding more information about the occupations (other than online):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you already know about the occupations?

What more do you want to learn about the occupations?

APPENDIX J

Career Confidence Counseling Group Survey and Evaluation

It has been a pleasure to have your participation in the counseling group, and the group leader appreciates your willingness to share, listen and learn about yourself and others. Please take a few moments to complete this survey and evaluation of your group counseling experience. The information will be used for making changes to improve future groups. Your comments and suggestions are very important for our organization to know how to make the groups as useful as possible for individuals seeking personal growth and career direction.

Sex: Male Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: (Circle all the apply) High School Some college  
Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree Vocational Training  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Employment Status: Currently employed: Yes No  
Will remain in job as long as possible  
Will change job within six months  
Will actively seek new employment within three months

Please write how you see your career developing in the next one to five years:

On a scale of 1-5, (1 Strongly Disagree; 6 Strongly Agree), please rate the following:

The *Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy* scale gave me an accurate picture of my confidence in areas of work.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

Identifying and becoming aware of my personal strengths was helpful for becoming more confident in my ability to work in careers that I had not previously considered.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

Exercises and journaling between group sessions helped me to focus on applying my signature strengths to my daily life, relationships, and activities.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

This group experience helped me to realize my potential in at least one career path.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

This group experience helped me to improve in at least one area of importance in my life.  
For example: goal setting, values clarification, leisure pursuits, relationships, overall happiness.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

This group helped me to deal with concerns that I had about my future.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

When I signed up for this group, I was sufficiently informed about its purpose and what I may expect from participating.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

The group members worked well together and respected each other with appropriate feedback and observations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

The group facilitator had understanding and knowledge about career decision challenges and strength-based application.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 Strongly Agree

This group counseling experience has helped me understand myself better.

Yes No

Please explain:

This group experience helped me to make better informed career decisions.

Yes No

Please explain:

What topics or assessments were most helpful and/or useful for you?

What topics or assessments were least helpful and/or useful for you? Please include whether the relevance was explained adequately.

Please write any suggestions or comments that will improve the group counseling experience.

Thank you for completing this survey and evaluation.