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We dedicate this book to all of the counselors who are called upon to provide assistance and support to the clients who bring career concerns into their sessions. Our hope is that the knowledge and interventions shared within this book will provide readers with creative and innovative techniques and perspectives that will help clients follow, and achieve, their career aspirations and dreams.
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A growing number of adults find themselves struggling with career choices and options at different points within their life span. It is not uncommon for people to decide to change occupations at midlife, reenter the workforce after children are in school, or return to work in later adulthood. Facing an uncertain economy, many workers have found themselves in need of obtaining new job skills in order to advance in careers. Dual-career couples might have to make tough decisions regarding work opportunities; likewise, returning or retired military service personnel might find the civilian workforce expectations much different from those experienced in the military. Finding ways to encourage individuals in different career situations is a task that can be challenging for career counselors.

THE SCOPE OF THE BOOK

This book is designed for both dedicated career counselors and personal counselors who find themselves helping clients make sense of career concerns as they work to make sense of their lives. This book offers chapters with case vignettes in which creative career interventions are applied. Each of these chapters provides a thorough exploration of the career-related challenges and needs of each unique group. In this book, we provide an overview of the unique needs of several populations including caregivers; unwed mothers; formerly incarcerated individuals; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals; veterans; and many other populations. The background information provides counselors with a broadened understanding of the unique frames of reference and worldviews clients may bring to counseling. Although each client is unique, there are some common elements that most members of various groups share. These elements are highlighted in the population chapters along with specific information that can be beneficial to consider when providing counseling services.

Each population chapter opens with a case vignette in which a client’s story is presented for readers to consider. These cases highlight the diverse array of career- and lifestyle-related concerns that clients may bring to counseling. The vignettes are revisited at the close of the chapter to illustrate potential ways of helping clients resolve their concerns. The use of specific career counseling interventions provides the reader with a greater understanding of how practical applications can be
applied to various clients. The book contains more than 50 innovative career interventions that are located at the end of the book. These interventions can help one to have greater insight into how creativity can be used when working with clients facing career changes and challenges. Although these interventions are organized by specific populations, each one can be modified by the clinician to be effective with a diverse array of clients. We have also included several expressive arts interventions that can be used for career-specific counseling; these are found in Appendix O. The interventions were written by practitioners in the field who have worked with numerous clients on career-related issues.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE BOOK?

The intended audience for this book includes those professionals who specialize in career counseling, as well as any clinical mental health counselor working with adults. It is often difficult to unravel career counseling and life counseling, as our career concerns can affect all aspects of our lives, from the personal to the professional. It is beneficial for students as well as seasoned professionals who are seeking creative and innovative methods of enhancing their work with clients wrestling with issues related to their careers. The book provides a practical application of creative career interventions that can be useful when working with a wide variety of clients. Furthermore, although the book focuses on the specific needs of adults, one can use some of the interventions with teenagers who are considering college majors and career choices.

OVERALL VALUE OF THE BOOK

Although there are numerous career-counseling books on the market, this book provides a new perspective and an innovative twist on other resources. We wanted to go beyond providing information regarding career counseling and provide a book that is practical and, hopefully, inspirational in nature. The population chapters provide basic information but go beyond what is normally presented in career counseling books by using vignettes and applying creative career interventions. The book provides more than 50 interventions that can be used by career counselors in the field when working with a variety of clients who are facing different career issues and challenges.
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Wendy K. Killam, Suzanne Degges-White, and Rebecca E. Michel

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Suzanne Degges-White

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Rebecca E. Michel
CHAPTER 1

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Rebecca E. Michel

CASE VIGNETTE: ALEJANDRO

Alejandro was the youngest of four boys in the hard-working, blue-collar Martinez family. Alejandro’s father, Andrew, did not attend college, yet became a well-established journeyman electrician. Upon graduation from high school, Alejandro’s three older brothers, Diego, Nathan, and Daniel, all accepted electrician apprenticeships with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local union. Given the family’s long history with the IBEW, a career in the electrical trades was understood to be Alejandro’s postsecondary vocational education.

However, Alejandro was not sure if he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father and brothers. For one, electrical work was the least interesting of all the trades he was exposed to while enrolled in the career and technical education (CTE) program at High School. Although he was good with his hands and preferred the mechanical environment as opposed to the classroom, he just was not sure that electrical work was for him. With apprenticeship positions across the trades filling up quickly, Alejandro was pressured to make a career decision soon.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

High school graduates include individuals who have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a general educational development (GED) certificate, and who have not enrolled in postsecondary education. In 2014, approximately one third of high school graduates did not enroll in college, and more than 70% of these individuals were working or seeking employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2015a). Socioeconomic status is a strong indicator of college attendance. Individuals who graduated from a high-poverty public high school were the least likely to attend college (National Student Clearinghouse, 2014).

People living in poverty may not believe that higher education is worth the financial investment (Packard, Leach, Ruiz, Nelson, & DiCocco, 2012) and may choose jobs based on survival rather than vocational interest (Blustein et al., 2002). Thus, high school graduates often pursue shorter term positions rather than investing time to prepare for a career aligned with their values, skills, and abilities (Laird, Chen, &...
Levesque, 2006). Millennial high school graduates (born after 1980) are three times more likely than college graduates to describe work as just a job to get by compared to a career or stepping stone to a career (Pew Research Center, 2014). The occupational opportunities for high school graduates have changed in the past few decades.

**HISTORICAL CAREER PATHS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

Historically, graduates entered the workforce directly following high school and found available entry-level employment in many different sectors. In recent decades, the educational requirements for jobs across the career spectrum have increased, changing the types of available positions for individuals without postsecondary education. In the United States today, approximately 6 out of 10 jobs require some postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). However, despite significant changes in the career landscape, there are still many occupations that do not require a college degree. Currently, 200 to 350 occupations are featured for high school graduates in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (BLS, 2015b), O*Net Online (2015), and the BLS (2014) websites. Over the next decade, the projected growth rate for occupations that require only a high school diploma is 9.1%, and these positions are expected to account for more than half of all new jobs (BLS, 2013). High school graduates are expected to be eligible for two thirds of the occupations with the largest projected employment increases (e.g., home health aides, construction workers, and carpenters). Individuals can also receive career training and education in apprenticeship programs while also earning a paycheck. Although the types of jobs available for high school graduates have changed over the past several decades, there are many career opportunities for high school graduates in various sectors of the labor force. However, despite their job options, high school graduates still face unique career challenges.

**CAREER OBSTACLES FACING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

One of the most significant obstacles high school graduates face today reflects the current economic landscape. The Great Recession that lasted from 2007 to 2009 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2012) and the subsequent slow economic recovery have negatively impacted the jobs available for high school graduates. These individuals are more likely to be unemployed (28.8%) than recent high school graduates enrolled in college (BLS, 2015a). Although most high school graduates are seeking jobs, in 2014 the employment rate of high school graduates aged 20 to 24 years was only 63% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Additionally, the value of high school education has dramatically declined over the past several decades. The average wage for high school graduates without further education declined from $31,400 in 1965 to $28,000 in 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2014). As a result of these factors, approximately 22% of high school graduates are living in poverty today (Pew Research Center, 2014). It is vital to understand the unique needs facing high school graduates as they strive to develop skills to be competitive on the job market.
CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

As high school graduates transition into the working world, they must develop a comprehensive understanding of how to utilize their own skills, abilities, and interests to secure a job. Young adults who understand themselves and the demands of the world of work are better able to make career choices congruent with their values and interests. High school graduates who are adaptable and open minded in their job search will likely retain employment in a workforce that is constantly changing. However, some high school graduates lack work ethic, problem-solving abilities, and timeliness, which make them unprepared to transition into entry-level positions. It is ideal for individuals to have their academic and behavioral needs met during high school so that they can seamlessly transition into a career following graduation.

Comprehensive school counseling programs prepare high school graduates to make informed career and educational choices to navigate different life roles and events (Gysbers, 2013). Following high school, these career-ready students are prepared to enter the workforce, apprenticeship program, technical school, community college, or university. Many high school students also gain real-world job training that provides a realistic preview of various careers.

SUPPORTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

High school graduates need help to transfer skills learned in school into the world of work. In 1994, the U.S. Congress allocated funding for the School-to-Work Opportunities Act to enhance career preparation in U.S. public schools (Neumark & Rothstein, 2007). This included diverse transitional programs, such as career planning, internships, cooperative education, and job shadowing (Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, & Dornsife, 1995). These initiatives expose high school students to career-related experiences to connect what they are learning in high school with the world of work (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

CTE programs were developed to improve academic, technical, and job-specific skills to increase employability of high school graduates by helping them develop skills in critical thinking, communication, problem solving, collaboration, teamwork, and innovation. Students can gain education and experience in 16 different career areas, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); human services; and manufacturing (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2015). More than 90% of high school graduates have earned CTE credits (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011), and participation in CTE has been shown to reduce dropout rates and help students obtain industry-endorsed certificates and technical endorsements (Plank, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2005). These individuals demonstrated more realistic expectations about their job opportunities, more consistent ideas about possible career options, and greater job satisfaction following high school (Blustein, 1997). Young adults aged 16 to 24 years interested in career technical training and education could also enroll in Job Corps (2015), which provides hands-on career training, job assistance, education, and transitional support in more than 100 different career areas (e.g., construction, business, and health.
care). Programs like these help people living in poverty secure employment following graduation.

There are also many relevant web resources available to support high school graduates (see Additional Resource Suggestions). The BLS features career-planning articles appropriate for high school graduates. For example, Torpey (2015) provided a guide to learning about oneself and possible careers with information about how to gain relevant job experience. There is also information about apprenticeship programs and vocational schools. High school graduates can access these resources on their own or with the support of a career counselor.

**CAREER COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS WITH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES**

Career counselors work with high school graduates using various approaches to meet their needs. Effective career interventions during and following high school expose individuals to role models who can share information about careers and expand their social networks (Brown & Krane, 2000) as well as help them make informed decisions about how to gain relevant work experience to improve their resume and career outlook (Packard et al., 2012). High school graduates who are adaptable and used social networks have more successful school-to-work transitions (Blustein, Phillips, Jobin-Davis, Finkelberg, & Roarke, 1997). It is especially helpful for low-income individuals to adaptively respond to unexpected events and setbacks in their careers (Bright & Pryor, 2005). Career construction theory (CCT; Savickas, 2005) can be used to assist high school graduates improve adaptability during career transitions.

In CCT, counselors use the Career Style Interview (CSI; Savickas, 2005) to encourage the client to tell his or her story. Throughout this narrative process, clients gain awareness about life themes (e.g., aspects that give an individual meaning and purpose), vocational identity (e.g., abilities, skills, needs, values, and interests), and career adaptability (e.g., coping skills to overcome career challenges). This approach is helpful with high school graduates striving to construct their identities and discover jobs that may be enjoyable. By gaining self-awareness and enhancing career adaptability, high school graduates are better equipped to make career-related decisions.

It is also important that career counselors assist high school graduates with career decision making in order to facilitate intentional choices regarding occupations based on their interests, skills, projected job growth, and decline. Career counselors could administer various assessments to help clients discover their career skills and interests and new career possibilities (Wood & Hays, 2013). Assessments such as Holland’s (1959, 1997) RIASEC Interest Inventory (i.e., Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) provide information to high school graduates about the types of careers they might be interested in based on different work environments. Additionally, the StrengthsFinder (Rath, 2007) helps students discover their natural talents and the types of jobs that would be most rewarding. After taking assessments, high school graduates could search for specific careers using O*Net Online (2015) based on
their interests and talents. Such information empowers high school graduates to evaluate potential occupations.

High school graduates might also consider the different possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) they could become depending on their choices (Pisarik & Shoffner, 2009). To facilitate this process, career counselors have the option to use Possible Selves Mapping (Shepard & Marshall, 1999) with high school graduates to help them discover more about their identity and improve career decision making (Michel, 2013). This assessment encourages clients to think about who they could become, hope to become, and fear they might become in the future (Shepard & Marshall, 1999).

It is important for high school students to receive realistic information about their skills, interests, and the job market so that they can make effective career decisions about which occupations to pursue or avoid. Recent high school graduates could access the employment projections from the BLS. Career counselors help high school graduates establish realistic expectations and develop strategies to remain flexible as they transition into the working world. See Appendix A for additional suggestions.

REVISITING THE CASE OF ALEJANDRO

Alejandro connected with a counselor from his former high school to help him decide his next steps regarding employment. He admitted to feeling conflicted for wanting to establish a career outside of electrical work because this would break an important family tradition. However, Alejandro wanted to explore different options and choose a career he would enjoy, not just one that he would get because of family connections. The career counselor administered different assessments to Alejandro to help him discover more about his interests, talents, and career identity. After receiving the results, he wrote down words that described himself.

Alejandro took the RIASEC (Holland, 1997) to evaluate his interests. His codes and personalized descriptions included Realistic (like to work with hands and machines; prefer to solve concrete problems), Artistic (creative and unconventional; enjoys designing and creating art with different materials), Enterprising (goal-oriented; leader). Alejandro also took the StrengthsFinder Assessment (Rath, 2007) to obtain information about his natural talents. His top five strengths and personalized descriptions were as follows:

- Responsibility: follow through with what I say I will do and value honesty and loyalty.
- Deliberative: anticipate obstacles and take time to make decisions or choices.
- Focus: take and follow through with directions in order to stay on track with progress.
- Restorative: good at resolving problems.
- Analytical: consider factors that might affect a situation in order to brainstorm reasons and causes (Rath, 2007).

Alejandro generally agreed with the results from both assessments and felt empowered to learn more about what types of occupations might be satisfying based on his interests and talents. For homework, he used his assessment results to access online resources (e.g., O*Net) and brainstormed 43 possible occupations of interest. Next, he used a worksheet to evaluate the occupations he wanted to learn more about based on
several factors (e.g., skills/knowledge/task fit, average income, projected job openings, potential job satisfaction, and overall rating of the occupation). His final list consisted of the following occupations: automotive worker, construction carpenter, heating and air conditioning mechanic, pipe fitter, welder, sheet metal worker, boilermaker, steel worker, and layout worker.

Next, the counselor led Alejandro through the Possible Selves Mapping Exercise (PSME; Shepard & Marshall, 1999) to explore more about his career identity. Using the list of occupations he brainstormed and researched, Alejandro shared the following list of hoped-for selves and feared selves:

What I Hope to Become: I hope to be employed in a position as a construction carpenter, heating and air conditioning mechanic, welder, or sheet metal worker. I want to become trained in a career that will be fulfilling and where there is a lot of job growth expected. One day, I even hope to become a manager. I want to create my own career path. I think it is likely that I can obtain employment as long as I determine the steps required to enter these occupations.

What I Fear, Dread, or Don’t Want for Myself: I don’t want to be unemployed or train in an occupation that will become obsolete in the near future. I also don’t want to follow in the footsteps of my family and become an electrician.

Ultimately, Alejandro decided to apply to a 4-year sheet metal worker apprenticeship program. He accepted a full-time job that also included 250 hours of classroom training a year. He received paid on-the-job training to learn about building code requirements, how to read blueprints, and mathematical concepts. Eventually, he would become a journeyman, and with additional years of training, experience, and skills, he could have the opportunity to move up within the industry to project manager, foreman, general foreman, superintendent, or owner of a sheet metal company. At this point, though, Alejandro was simply relieved that he took the initiative to make his own career decision that was not dictated by his family. Ultimately, although his family was surprised, they were also very supportive of his decision to become a sheet metal worker. Regardless of where his career path would take him, Alejandro was now equipped with the tools to investigate and evaluate occupations and make a self-authorized career choice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

CareerOneStop (www.careeronestop.org) includes career resources appropriate for many types of job seekers. The website includes information about how to plan a job search, including information about the labor market, employment trends, and training opportunities. High school graduates specifically would benefit from the resources provided to entry-level workers, including how to choose a job goal and gain hands-on experience and information on networking, using social media, developing resumes and cover letters, preparing for interviews, and negotiating job offers.

My Next Move (www.mynextmove.org) is a tool that high school graduates can use to explore different career options, regardless of their stage of career decision making. Job seekers with some self-awareness about what they would like to do can describe their dream career or search for more than 900 different careers by industry (such as construction, mining, oil and gas, retail, or service). Other high school graduates who are undecided about their career can take an assessment (O*Net Interest Profiler) to obtain a list of possible occupations based on their interests and current level of education. Individuals can also download the What’s My Next Move Career Guide (www.careeronestop.org/whats-my-next-move.aspx) that
provides a seven-step career planning process with ideas for self-assessment, career exploration, goal setting, and starting a career.

Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh) includes information for job seekers. High school graduates could search for occupations by their current educational level, level of on-the-job training required, number of projected jobs, and the median pay. There is an overview about what people in this career do, the work environment, important qualities to possess, similar occupations, and how to obtain a position in this occupation.

O*Net Online (www.onetonline.org) features occupations based on the level of education, experience, and training required. High school graduates could search for occupations in job zones one and two. Each occupation featured includes a brief overview of the position, job titles, work activities, tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, interests (based on Holland codes), work styles, and work values important to possess in this occupation. Related occupations are also listed as well as a search engine to explore available job openings.

REFERENCES


