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An Exploration of Career Transition Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adult College Graduates

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AN EXPLORATION OF CAREER TRANSITION SELF-EFFICACY IN

EMERGING ADULT COLLEGE GRADUATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Title: An Exploration of Career Transition Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adult College
     Graduates

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At the intersection of college and work is a complex transition that graduates face every day. Expectations are often high that graduates will move quickly into a career of their choosing, a common measurement of success. Colleges and universities are often seen as having responsibility for helping ensure this success. Yet, for many graduates the transition is challenging. In addition to finding employment, graduates may have difficulty moving into a chosen career due to not seeing themselves as *fully adult*, and not having a strong sense of personal or professional identity. Self-efficacy is an important measure in this transition because it has been shown to be a predictor of workforce success.

This mixed-method study sought to better understand the college to career transition experience of emerging adults and to explore the relationship between perceived adulthood and career transition self-efficacy. A total of 1,252 graduates from colleges and universities in Pennsylvania participated in the study and 10 participants were interviewed. The findings suggest that a more fully developed sense of adulthood is a predictor of career transition self-efficacy, as is attendance at a public university. In addition, the age of attendance at college was suggested to have a possible impact on the transition. In conclusion, this study is important because it aids in the understanding of the experience of the college to career transition. This study also shows that there are

ways colleges and universities can support graduates through the transition process and

shares specific practices for providing that support.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

At the intersection of higher education and the world of work is a complex and important transition that is faced by college graduates in the United States every day. A large number of college students attending four-year institutions graduate with the intention of going directly into the world of work, and research shows that the transition can be a challenging one (Wood & Kaczynski, 2007). In part, it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to ensure that their graduates navigate the transition successfully (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragnolini, 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), and the perception of success is often evidenced through the attainment of career opportunities. This study seeks to gain an understanding of the roles emerging adulthood, gender, age at graduation, and the choice of attending a public versus private college or university may play in the college to work transition and, specifically, in the career transition self-efficacy of graduates. In addition, this study aims to facilitate an understanding of how graduates experience the transition from college to career while navigating the life stage of emerging adulthood. This chapter provides background to the study including its significance to the field of educational research.

Statement of the Problem

For college graduates, the transition from college to the world of work may be challenging. There are often high expectations on the part of colleges, graduates, and families that something big will happen in the graduate's career following graduation. But the search for employment is often long, slow, and challenging. In fact, for 40.1% of

job seekers, it takes longer than 15 weeks to secure employment, and for 26.3% of job seekers, the search process takes more than 26 weeks (Ilg, 2011). In addition, many graduates have not yet identified their long-term career objectives (Arnett, 2000), making the transition more difficult. Further, the culture and daily responsibilities of the world of work and the world of college are vastly different (Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), and so the challenge of transition continues even once employment is obtained. Graduation from college is often expected to serve as a catalyst for career development and employment, and is a time when graduates anticipate significant and positive outcomes related to the world of work. In this important and unique time of life, colleges have significant responsibility for preparing graduates for successfully navigating the transition (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007); successful navigation is often evidenced by attainment of employment in a field of the graduate's choice (Gallifa, 2009).

The challenges of this transition are magnified when approached from the lens of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a stage of life between adolescence and adulthood, approximately occurring between the ages of 18 and 29, during which young people, particularly those who attend college full-time, may have unprecedented freedom and few responsibilities (Arnett, 2000). During this stage of life, the common milestones of adulthood including being financially independent, embarking on a specific long-term career path, and identifying a life partner, have not yet been reached. While historically, these milestones have occurred in the early twenties, a trend over the last 50 years has been for these milestones to occur in the middle to late twenties (Arnett, 2000). This

shift, in conjunction with the recognition that young people between 18 and 29 are

reflecting on and exploring their personal and vocational identities, led Jeffrey Jensen

Arnett (2000) to posit that emerging adulthood is a new developmental stage in life. For

many students, the transition from college to work occurs during this stage of exploration

and identity seeking, adding to the need for a better understanding of how college

students navigate the transition from college to work.

Self-efficacy is a measurable characteristic that may have a positive impact on the

successful college to work transition for emerging adults. Higher levels of self-efficacy

may be beneficial to the college to work transition during emerging adulthood because

positive self-efficacy increases the willingness to approach rather than avoid specific

actions, facilitates performance of specific actions, and leads to greater persistence when

faced with challenges or failures (Bandura, 1982). For these reasons, self-efficacy during

the college to career transition is an important measure to understand. Because self-

efficacy is not a "passive or static attribute, but rather is a dynamic set of self-beliefs that

interact in a complex way with other contextual variables" (Lee & Park, 2012, p. 195),

understanding the relationships between self-efficacy and other variables that make up

the "perfect storm" of challenge and expectation during the college to career transition is

key.

Understanding how career transition self-efficacy during the transition process

may be impacted by recent graduates' concepts of themselves as adults may provide

important insight into facilitating a successful college to career transition for college

graduates. Colleges and universities need to understand the relationships among

perceived status as an adult, institutional choice, and the college to work transition that

occurs in the first few years following college graduation so they can better prepare graduates for success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-method study, consisting of surveys and interviews, is to explore the relationships between career transition self-efficacy and, 1) perceived adulthood status, 2) certain demographic variables including age at graduation and type of institution attended. This study is important to helping colleges and universities better understand the unique and challenging reality of two significant experiences (the college to career transition and emerging adulthood), which for many college graduates, happen simultaneously. Multiple regression analysis, along with descriptive statistics, will comprise the quantitative component of this study, while a narrative based interview process will provide an equally important qualitative component. The mixed-method approach provides depth, context, and individual voice to the understanding of the unique experience of progressing through emerging adulthood while simultaneously transitioning from college to work. This study will serve as a foundation of information for this period of transition while bridging the gaps among existing bodies of literature on the topics of emerging adulthood, self-efficacy, and the college to work transition. Insight on this topic will help colleges and universities begin to recognize ways in which they may be able to support the college to career transition of recent graduates who are emerging adults.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the conceptual frameworks of emerging adulthood and social cognitive theory, in which self-efficacy plays an important role. The framework of

emerging adulthood includes the idea that young people from 18-29 are different today than they were in generations past. Specifically, this group is not yet adult, but they also are not adolescents. Adulthood, from this perspective, is achieved when individuals feel like they are adults, have financial responsibility for themselves, have begun making longer-term decisions about their careers and lives, and have a sense of their vocational and personal identities (Arnett, 2000). Arnett's research has found that people in the state of emerging adulthood have not yet achieved these milestones. In conjunction with not having attained the milestones of or the feeling of being adult, emerging adults have a unique opportunity to explore and reflect on a variety of life experiences, including career decisions, with very few responsibilities or expectations, in part due to a time of significant freedom and few adult responsibilities. The interplay of these realities during emerging adulthood makes it a unique stage of life with a significant impact on the career lives and trajectories of recent college graduates who are transitioning from the world of college to the world of work.

A second conceptual framework from which this study is viewed is Bandura's social cognitive theory, and specifically, Bandura's model of self-efficacy and performance. Social cognitive theory states that individuals are "agentic operators in their own lives" (Bandura, 1999, p. 155). Being an agentic operator refers to an individual acting in such a way as to intentionally influence his or her own life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). Further, the theory postulates that agentic actions shape brain development such that the behaviors and actions individuals choose to perform produce the biological foundation necessary for skill development in those areas. "It is not just exposure to stimulation, but agentic action in exploring, manipulating, and

influencing the environment that counts" (Bandura, 1999, p. 155). Within social cognitive theory, self-efficacy figures prominently as a model.

Perceived self-efficacy refers to one's judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). According to Bandura, self-efficacy is important because it affects whether someone will perform an action, the amount of effort dedicated toward that action, the person's persistence in the face of obstacles, and levels of performance attainment (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is developed when people experience success performing the behavior, when they watch the behavior being successfully performed, when they are told they have the capacity to perform the behavior (Lin & Flores, 2011), and when positive physical responses occur during the behavior (Bandura, 1982). From this conceptual framework, career transition self-efficacy is a vital construct to understanding successful transitions from college to career.

Research Questions

In exploring career transition self-efficacy at the intersection of the college to work transition and emerging adulthood, the guiding question for this study was: What is the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy of recent college graduates? In addition, there were four sub-questions addressed by this study:

- What is the effect of perceived adulthood status on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of age at graduation on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of gender on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of type of institution attended on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

Based on the review of literature, the expectation is to find that career transition self-efficacy may be impacted by several important variables including the level to which a recent graduate perceives him/herself to be an adult, the age at which they graduated from college, their gender, and whether the graduate attended a private or public institution.

Research Methodology

This mixed-method study explores the relationships among career transition self-efficacy, perceived adulthood status, gender, age at graduation, and the choice of public or private college or university in the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult college graduates. This study also explores the experience of transitioning from college to work as an emerging adult recent college graduate in Pennsylvania. Quantitative research methods for this study include both descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Narrative research was conducted for the qualitative component of this study.

Significance of the Study

This research studies recent college graduates' career transition self-efficacy (in an emerging adult population) in an effort to understand how career transition self-efficacy may vary among graduates in various stages of emerging adulthood and among those who graduated from public versus private colleges and universities. It also seeks to understand how career transition self-efficacy may be impacted by other demographic

variables including age at graduation from college and gender. Further, this study seeks to gain insight into how graduates experience self-efficacy during the simultaneous experiences of, 1) transitioning from college to work and 2) developing through emerging adulthood. This research may help colleges and universities gain a better understanding of the transition experience of graduates and an understanding of how emerging adulthood and institutional choice may impact career transition self-efficacy and, thereby, success, after graduation. A proactive effort, by colleges and universities, to help ensure the success of alumni after graduation is vital to meeting the expectations of graduates and their families, and to building alumni relationships, which are foundational to alumni giving (Pearson, 1999).

Answering the question of how career transition self-efficacy may vary among emerging adults in various stages of adulthood (Arnett, 2000) and how it may differ by gender, age at graduation, and among those who graduated from public versus private colleges and universities, will help answer the larger question of how emerging adult graduates experience the transition from college to work and how they experience their own self-efficacy during the four years following graduation. Further, this information may contribute to a better understanding of how colleges and universities can better prepare their students and recent graduates for the transition from college to career by facilitating the development of their career transition self-efficacy.

Definition of Terms

Career transition self-efficacy: An individual's belief that he or she can successfully accomplish activities related to choosing, transitioning into, and being successful in a career of their choosing.

College graduate: An individual who successfully completed the requirements of a degree program at a four-year institution.

College to career transition: The period of time following graduation from a four-year college, when recent graduates search for and attain a career path of their choosing and integrate into the cultural and social world of the work environment; a process that may take several years and does not necessarily end with the attainment of an initial post-graduation job.

Developing a support network: Building and maintaining supportive professional and personal relationships that serve to ease challenges encountered by the social aspects of transitioning to a new career after graduation from college.

Emerging adulthood: A period of life from the late teens through the late twenties marked by frequent change and exploration in the areas of "love, work, and worldviews" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469).

Navigating work responsibilities: Understanding the requirements of a work role and the extent to which performance meets those requirements; managing ambiguity in the workplace; being aware of resources to support job performance; ability to solve problems that arise in the workplace.

Perceived self-efficacy: One's judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122).

Progressing in a chosen career path: Having a longer-term vision and plan for a chosen career path; knowing the steps necessary to move forward in reaching a longer-term career goal; identifying areas of improvement; developing necessary skills to support forward movement towards career goals.

Recent college graduate: Alumni of four-year colleges and universities who graduated within the last four years.

Type of Institution: Designation of a four-year college or university either as a public institution within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, or as a private institution in Pennsylvania.

Understanding workplace culture: Demonstrating socially acceptable workplace behavior; understanding the organizational hierarchy and expectations of a workplace; interacting with colleagues in a way that aligns with organizational and departmental expectations; being aware of social mores of a specific work environment.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions associated with this study. One assumption is that the assessment instrument fidelity is accurate based on research. This study also makes an assumption that participants honestly report the perception of their levels of self-efficacy and adulthood status. An additional key assumption is that colleges and universities have a significant role in preparing students for successfully entering the work force.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations to this study. First, the study was limited to four-year institutions and did not look at populations who did not graduate from college or those who graduated from a two-year institution. Second, the study sample was not random and therefore not generalizable outside of the study population. Third, email correspondence was used to solicit participants, which limited the population to those alumni who regularly access email and to those who have accurate email addresses listed in the alumni directories of their alma mater.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, this study compared graduates with a variety of diverse life experiences, making it challenging to control for other potential causes for results of the study. Second, the relatively smaller number of alumni who graduated at the later stages of emerging adulthood meant that these participants were represented in smaller proportions than traditionally-aged college students. Third, the study relied on graduates' self-report of self-efficacy beliefs and perceived adulthood status. Fourth, the colleges and universities in this study were chosen by purposeful sampling, rather than a randomized sampling process, which impacts the ability to generalize findings outside the sample.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study, including a brief review of the literature, a statement of purpose, problem statement, and research questions. In addition, Chapter 1 provides details related to the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study and definition of terms. The significance of the study and a brief description of the research methodology are also included.

The second chapter consists of a review of literature, that is separated into distinct sections. The first section will explore the college to work transition, followed by a review of literature on the private and public college experiences. Emerging adulthood, self-efficacy, and career development are addressed in subsequent sections of the review.

Chapter 3 of this study provides an in-depth description of the methodology of the research. Included in this chapter are details related to both the qualitative and

quantitative components of the study, in addition to the instrumentation that was used for interviews and surveys. A description of the population and sample selection process is also included.

Data analysis and summary related to the research questions will be the make up of Chapter 4. Conclusions that are supported by the research and suggestions for further research are included in the final chapter, Chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the basis for this study, including a brief review of literature, purpose, and research questions. This study was designed to add to the base of knowledge related to self-efficacy beliefs of college graduates who were experiencing the unique intersection of the transition from college to the world of work while simultaneously seeking their personal and vocational identities as key components of the stage of emerging adulthood. The following chapters will focus on a more extensive review of literature, the research methodology, analysis of the collected data, and a discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a review of the literature related to this study. Detailed

descriptions of studies are included; this chapter also serves to synthesize key research

from each of these areas. Specifically, this chapter addresses literature on topics related

to (a) the college to work transition, (b) public and private college experiences, (c)

emerging adulthood, and (d) self-efficacy in career development. The scope of the

literature review was determined by the research question for this study and represents a

body of work that is important to an understanding of the foundation on which this study

is built.

Career Transition Self-Efficacy of Emerging Adult College Graduates

College graduates end their time at four-year institutions with a goal of leaving

behind their role as student and moving into a long-term career. Graduation is a time of

expectation and possibility as alumni look to what may be possible in the next steps of

their professional careers. As important and full of possibility as this transition is to the

lives of graduates, it is often a difficult transition to navigate (Wood & Kaczynski, 2007).

In part, it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to help alumni successfully

meet the expectations of that transition, which include attaining the career opportunities

they seek (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson,

2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007).

The challenge of transitioning from college to the world of work is exacerbated

by the fact that, for many college graduates, the transition occurs during emerging

adulthood, a stage of life between the ages of 18 and 29 that is rich with the potential for

both possibility and anxiety as young people explore and seek their personal and vocational identities. Emerging adults slowly develop their vocational and personal identities throughout emerging adulthood by "trying on" various life experiences (Arnett, 2000). These life experiences may impact their career transition self-efficacy in different ways. By their mid-to-late twenties they achieve full adulthood, at which time they: (a) have a clearer understanding of who they are, (b) have begun making longer-term decisions about love, work, and life, and (c) view themselves as adults (Arnett, 2000). However, in the years of exploration and transition prior to reaching these milestones, emerging adulthood can be a tumultuous time; a time of change, discovery, possibility, and uncertainty.

Self-efficacy has been established as an important component of career development that impacts both career behavior and career outcomes (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Betz, 2007; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Lubbers, Loughlin, & Zweig, 2005; Saks, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Yang & Gysbers, 2007). Based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, in which self-efficacy plays a primary role, high levels of self-efficacy about specific tasks predict a higher level of activity in those tasks. Additionally, high levels of self-efficacy also predict career outcomes (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Bandura, 1982). For college graduates who are also emerging adults, the college to work transition represents a time of unprecedented growth, possibility, expectation, challenge, and significance as graduates simultaneously prepare for the world of work and seek their personal and vocational identities. Career transition self-efficacy may be particularly important to emerging adults as they try on various careers and explore possibilities for their work life.

Most students graduate from college during the potentially tumultuous stage of emerging adulthood. College graduation carries with it unique expectations and possibilities, as it represents, for many, a new opportunity for entering the workforce. Yang and Gysbers (2007) write, "career search is one of the most important tasks that graduating college students face" (Yang & Gysbers, 2007, p. 157). Upon graduation, families, graduates, faculty, and administrators all have expectations that graduates will move onto a chosen career path. Further, they expect that the career chosen will be a demonstration of the value of the graduates' new college degree. Yet, as emerging adults who may not have a strong sense of their vocational and personal identities, graduates may not be ready to make these long-term decisions. Rather, it is more likely that they will continue exploring and trying on different possibilities for a number of years before making a long-term career decision (Arnett, 2004). Because of the simultaneous experience of developing through emerging adulthood and transitioning to the world of work, it is important to understand the relationships among status as an emerging adult, type of institution attended, the experience of transitioning from college to work, and career transition self-efficacy. It may be that recent college graduates who are further along in emerging adulthood at the time of graduation will be better prepared to make a longer-term decision about career choice.

Gaining a better understanding of the relationships among career transition self-efficacy, type of undergraduate institution, and emerging adulthood (relative to the transition from college to the world of work) will help answer the larger question of how status as an adult and institutional choice may impact the career transition self-efficacy of recent graduates. This knowledge will provide colleges and universities with information

to help them understand the experiences of their recent graduates, and may inform steps to better prepare graduates for the transition into a career after graduation. Further, the extent to which a graduate experiences their transition as successful may impact the perceived value of their college experience. For all of these reasons, colleges and universities will benefit from additional understanding in this area.

Although both the transition from college to work and the transition through emerging adulthood have been identified as significant and challenging times of life (Arnett, 2000; Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine, 2005), few studies exist on college students once they leave college (Arnett, 2000), and research has not fully explored the role of work and career development in emerging adults (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). Konstam and Lehmann (2010) acknowledge that most of the research related to self-efficacy has been focused on students and, while this population is important, there is a lack of research on the emerging adult population and self-efficacy.

These critical times of transition, emerging adulthood and college graduation, occur simultaneously for most college graduates, which intensifies the importance of this area of research. There is an overall lack of comprehensive data on the experience of emerging adults transitioning to the workforce from college. This study expands current knowledge on the topic of career transition self-efficacy of college graduates in emerging adulthood and contributes to the understanding of the college to work transition from an emerging adulthood perspective.

Knowledge in this area will help colleges and universities understand the role emerging adulthood may play in the transition from college to post-graduate professional life. This study also bridges gaps among main bodies of literature on this topic area by

focusing on a graduate population and by exploring career transition self-efficacy from an emerging adulthood perspective. The discussion that follows is a review of the literature on the topic, including several key areas: transitioning from college to career, the college experience, self-efficacy, and emerging adulthood.

College to Work Transition

Colleges measure their success, in part, based on recent graduate employment attainment. In fact, employment is one of the five assessment categories on the U.S. Department of Education's (2013) College Scorecard consumer website. Gallifa (2009) writes, "One of the most important outcomes for universities is the quality of their graduates' integration into the job market" (Gallifa, 2009, p. 229). It has become accepted that one purpose of higher education is to prepare students for employment and for the transition to employment (Crebert et al., 2004). Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) call it an *imperative* that colleges and universities address the transition from college life to the workplace (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008, p.152).

Additional evidence indicating that colleges and universities have responsibility for preparing students for the transition to the world of work can be found in the work of Grubb and Lazerson (2005) who suggest that the integration of academic learning and vocational learning is a way to meet this responsibility. Similar ideas are raised by Wood and Kaczynski (2007) in their study, "University Students in USA and Australia: Anticipation and Reflection on the Transition to Work," which explores graduates' experiences of the college to work transition and the role of higher education in that transition. In their case study of college graduates who graduated within the previous five years, Wood and Kaczynski (2007) take the view that institutions of higher education

have dual roles of both preparing students for a specific profession and also preparing students more broadly for any position. Further, 68% of employers, in a survey of more than 400 employers across the United States, agree that colleges and universities should shoulder responsibility for preparing students for postgraduate success (Casner-Lotto, 2006). Four-year colleges and universities are simply expected to prepare students for entering the workforce after graduation.

Beyond the idea that colleges and universities should be responsible for helping to ensure that their alumni attain success in their post-graduation endeavors, proactive efforts to assist alumni in succeeding professionally are beneficial to colleges and universities. One way this effort can benefit the institution is by increasing the positive perception of the institution. Many institutions are sharing the results of alumni surveys as a way of informing prospective students and other stakeholders about the institution; these data are also being used to assess how well the college met their goals and for planning future initiatives (Volkwein, 2010). In these situations, having positive alumni feedback related to institutional support in post-graduate life could provide institutions with an injection of positive perception.

In addition to the potential increase in positive perception, taking an active stance to support alumni in their transition from college to career also provides a financial benefit to institutions. In 2012, alumni contributed 24.8% of all fundraising gifts to colleges and universities (Kaplan, 2012) and alumni giving is dependent on an individual's engagement with their college or university (Pearson, 1999; Tsao & Coll, 2005; Volkwein, 2010). As Jerold Pearson writes, "philanthropic support for an institution depends, to a large extent, on the relationships it has with its prospects"

(Pearson, 1999, p. 5). Further, alumni satisfaction, and perhaps alumni giving, is greater when alumni perceive that their institution purposefully designed the programs and resources that were beneficial to them (Pearson, 1999). Given that institutions hold some responsibility for preparing their graduates for career transition success (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), and that the successful transition of graduates to the world of work can be of financial benefit to the institution while also serving to increase positive perception of the institution among stakeholders, understanding factors that may impact a successful transition for recent graduates is vital.

Students transitioning from college to work have unique and challenging experiences. In their 2007 study, Wood and Kaczynski explored students' perceptions of the relationship between their college experience and subsequent professional work. A case study of 18 graduates of mathematics programs at Australian universities showed that, at graduation, participants did not feel that they were prepared for the transition to the world of work. Specifically, the study found that graduates perceive that they are "unprepared for the office environment, in particular dealing with colleagues and managers" (Wood & Kaczynski, 2007, p. 100). Graduates mentioned that the best preparation they received came from part-time work and experiences occurring away from their university, outside of academia. Wood and Kaczynski (2007) concluded that institutions of higher education could and should address the preparation and development needs of students transitioning to the world of work through the addition of applied learning strategies within the university.

The transition from college to work is fraught with change and requires significant adaptive ability (Arnett, 2000; Crebert et al., 2004; European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). Acknowledging that many graduates do not feel prepared and that colleges and universities play an important role in preparing students, it would be helpful to explore what makes this transition from college to work difficult. Two aspects of the transition that make it particularly challenging include unrealistic expectations about work and the cultural differences between the college experience and the work environment (Crebert et al., 2004; Koro-Ljungberg & Hayes, 2006; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). For example, the college experience is usually structured with assignments and instruction. In addition, feedback is provided routinely and frequently. By contrast, work experiences rarely include these kinds of learning interactions (Crebert et al., 2004; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). Further, the culture of college and work are different. In college, students are surrounded by peers, are often secure in their environment, are given specific and constant direction and feedback, and have tangible, measured ways to determine their level of success. When college students embark on their journey from college to the world of work, those guides disappear. Grades are not given on a weekly basis as a pronouncement of success or lack of success (Crebert et al., 2004; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). In addition, feedback and direction are not only less frequent, but also may be less clear. Lastly, multiple generational workplaces are common, adding another layer of necessary adaptation—working closely with colleagues representing multiple generations.

Taken together, the difficulty making cultural and environmental adjustments to the workplace, in combination with a student perception of unpreparedness for the work

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place, turns what many people assume will be a natural progression into a difficult and tumultuous transition. Because of these challenges, recent graduates need support in making that transition. As Fouad and Bynner (2008) write, "Individuals must be emotionally, cognitively, and socially ready for a transition and must marshal their resources to make the transition" (Fouad & Bynner, 2008, p. 244). It is, in part, the responsibility of colleges and universities to help ensure that graduates are ready and have the necessary skills to marshal those resources.

Private and Public College Experiences

The choice of whether to attend a private or public college or university is an important decision for many students as they begin their college experience. For some students, the differences between the experience of attending a public or private college or university may not be apparent or clearly understood. The differences between public and private colleges and universities stem, foundationally, from the different ways these types of institutions are organized and governed, and by the way they derive revenue (White, 2003). More visible, perhaps, than the way they are governed, another difference between public and private colleges and universities is size. In 1999, the average public institution in the United States enrolled 9,800 students while the average private institution enrolled just 1,900 students (White, 2003). Partly due to the size differential "private education is conducted in more intimate settings that promote greater student-faculty interaction and more rapid progress toward the completion of degrees" (White, 2003, p. 52). In fact, the six-year graduation rate for students entering college in the fall of 2005 was 57% at public institutions and 65% at private nonprofit institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

While graduation rates are higher at private not for profit colleges and universities, researchers Scott et al. (2006) argue that the statistic is misleading. In their 2006 study, Scott et al. used existing data from the American Survey of Colleges and Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System to analyze six-year graduation rates while taking into account the level of institutional resources and characteristics of the student body (e.g. percentage of non-traditional students). The results of the study indicate that the differences between graduation rates at public versus private institutions can be attributed to differences in the student body. Further, Scott et al. posit that public colleges and universities utilize resources more effectively than private institutions (Scott, Bailey, & Kienzl, 2006).

Additional common topics of discussion related to the choice of public or private college are cost and student resources. According to the College Board (2013), the average cost of tuition, room, and board for a private nonprofit four-year higher education institution was $40,917 per year, compared to $18,391 for a four-year public higher education institution (in state tuition). The higher price tag of private institutions is often thought to include more personalized learning opportunities, smaller classes, additional resources, and increased support compared to public institutions (Triventi & Trivellato, 2012; White, 2013). These fundamental differences can result in distinctly different experiences for students and graduates.

The discourse around differences between public and private institutions and, specifically the student experience at each type of institution, demonstrates the importance of increased knowledge in this area. Whether the dialogue relates to graduation rates, resource utilization, learning outcomes, or student support and

engagement, the fundamental differences between public and private colleges dictate that student and graduate experiences are different based on the type of institution attended. Graduate self-efficacy related to careers, during the transition following graduation, may be impacted by the type of institution attended.

Emerging Adulthood

Today's 22-year old is very different than the 22-year old of 50 years ago. In the 1970s young adults settled into a career, became financially independent, and married in their early twenties. Looking back over the last 50 years, there is a significant trend toward people making adult life decisions about love, work, and identity later in life than they were in past years. Today's young people are waiting longer to incorporate key aspects of adulthood into their lives including taking responsibility for themselves, achieving financial independence, and making long-term career decisions. Many of the landmarks of adulthood that used to occur by the age of 22 or 23 are now occurring at the age of 27 or 28 (Arnett, 2000; European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Shulman, Blatt, & Feldman, 2006).

With those commitments occurring later in the lives of young people today, the late teens and twenties are now characterized as a time of exploration and change, and a time of preparation for adulthood (Arnett, 2000; European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Shulman et al., 2006). The age when people reach adulthood is increasing, which has led Jeffrey Jensen Arnett to argue that with these dynamic changes, a new developmental stage has emerged, which he calls emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood, which occurs between the ages of 18 and 29 (Arnett, 2004), is a time characterized by change and exploration. In addition to not yet reaching the

major milestones traditionally associated with adulthood, an increasing number of emerging adults attend college, where they often experience an unprecedented amount of freedom combined with few role requirements. The freedom to explore and to delay major adult decisions provides them with a moratorium on adulthood (Arnett, 2004). In this period of life, emerging adults try on various life decisions (Arnett 2000; Shulman et al., 2006; European Group for Integrated Social research, 2001).

Emerging adults have the ability to explore diverse and unpredictable activities because they are not yet constrained by role expectations (Arnett, 2000). Making a commitment to a longer-term career plan may not occur for many years after college graduation. In fact, the length of time emerging adults stay at any one job may be very short for the four or five years following graduation (Arnett, 2012). During this time of shorter term, intermediary career steps, emerging adults are considering various possibilities and discerning the career that may best fit their personal interests, values, and styles. "A key feature of emerging adulthood is that it is the period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity exploration in the areas of love, work, and worldviews" (Arnett, 2000, p. 473).

The shift from emerging adult to adulthood is a gradual one. Young emerging adults initially report a sense of beginning to feel like adults. Over time this feeling changes and emerging adults report that they feel like an adult in some ways. Eventually, they report a feeling of complete adulthood (Arnett, 2004). This feeling of adulthood is accompanied by confidence of having reached a point of accepting responsibility for their actions, making their own decisions, and being financially independent (Arnett, 2004). The transition has been described as being "in training" for adulthood, with young people

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often feeling that they are both adults and adolescents, simultaneously (European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001, p. 103).

Keys to development in emerging adulthood are exploration of, and greater understanding of, personal and vocational identity. Towards the end of emerging adulthood, emerging adults are more likely to be settled into their vocational and personal identity (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is a time of significant development. At the early stages of this period, a graduate's ideas and plans for their transition to the world of work may be very different than the ideas and plans the graduate holds in the later stages of emerging adulthood. In essence, although the ability to explore a variety of options is exciting and opens up doors to possibility, this stage of life can also be a time of anxiety and stress (Konstam & Lehmann, 2010) as the exploration may "result in a failure to achieve the occupation most desired or in an inability to find work that is satisfying and fulfilling" (Arnett, 2000, p. 474).

Vocational Identity

Arnett (2000) describes vocational identity as knowing the type of work that will be of interest long-term *and* understanding the likelihood of securing that type of work. Emerging adults seek to answer the questions: "What kind of work am I good at? What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long-term? What are my chances of getting a job in the field that seems to suit me best?" (Arnett, 2000, p. 474). Put another way, "experimentation in the work place is partially motivated by a search for purpose, meaning, and satisfaction with respect to one's career …" (Konstam & Lehmann, 2010, p. 152). Early in emerging adulthood, vocational identity is tentative and emerging adults may not consider the longer-term implications of working in a certain job. At this stage,

they may think of their work life as a way to earn an income, without attributing any significance to the decision (Arnett, 2000). As they develop through this life stage, however, their aim in securing employment becomes more purposeful and begins to be recognized as first steps on a pathway to longer-term goals they are beginning to set for themselves (Arnett, 2000). Through this process, vocational identity is explored and eventually internalized. While many recent graduate emerging adults may have a plan, the plan is subject to revision throughout the emerging adulthood years, with each revision incorporating a deeper understanding of their own values, interests, and goals (Arnett, 2004). They are learning what they want from both life and work.

In a longitudinal study by Staff, Harris, Sabates, and Briddell (2010), occupational certainty and wages were examined in adolescents and emerging adults over the course of a ten-year period from ages 16-26. Their research used data from the *National Education Longitudinal Study* (*NELS*), a study that gathered information on adolescents and emerging adults at 8th grade, 10th grade, 12th grade, and at age 26. Participants in this study reached age 26 in the year 2000, which was the year of the last data collection for the group. At age 26, participants reported wages earned from their primary job and also responded to questions to discern their occupational certainty. Specifically, they were asked to select from a list of 16 broad occupational categories, the career they plan to have when they are 30 years old. They also could select the option *don't know* (Staff et al., 2010, p. 666).

Results show that the 26 year olds who were uncertain about next steps in their career paths earned significantly less income than their peers who had clear vocational identities. These results held true even when controlling for differences in education,

type of work, and level of experience. This study supports the importance of vocational identity in the transition from college to work as well as the long-term value that can be gained by emerging adults asking questions and discovering answers about their own vocational identity.

Simultaneous Experience of Emerging Adulthood and College to Work Transition

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett argues that, in transitioning to life after college, graduates need a career plan with a "capital P," a route to help guide them through emerging adulthood and vocational choice and identity formation (2004). According to Arnett (2012), the most important thing colleges can do today is to address the special developmental needs of students and alumni who are in the midst of emerging adulthood. He challenges colleges and universities, "How can colleges better address the needs of emerging adults?" (Arnett, 2012). Understanding how emerging adult college graduates transition from college to work, and understanding their career transition self-efficacy, may be one way for colleges and universities to help students and alumni identify and put into place a career plan with a "capital P," as suggested by Arnett (2004).

In their study, "The College-to-Career Transition: An Exploration of Emerging Adulthood," Murphy et al. (2010) used a qualitative research method to explore the experience of 10 college graduates who received their bachelor's degree and began their transition to the world of work within three years prior to the study. Half of the participants were males and half were females and their ages ranged from 22 to 25 years. All were employed full-time and none were enrolled in or had attended graduate school at the time of the study. The authors created an interview protocol that was used to interview all 10 participants. The interview questions focused on participants'

experiences of their career development. Specifically, the concept of adaptability was explored in the interviews.

The study found that the experience of emerging adults is "multifaceted and often very challenging psychologically and vocationally" (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 175). One theme within the interviews was the importance of social support in the transition from college to work. During this time of "negotiating uncertain work environments," "seeming endless possibilities" and "limited opportunities," delaying or avoiding career decisions may seem like a plausible response for emerging adults (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 175). Despite these challenges, the research shows that emerging adults hold an overarching sense of optimism during their transition (Arnett, 2004; Murphy et al., 2010). However, this optimism is tempered by, and often coexists with, feelings of disappointment and unfulfilled expectations. During this period in their lives when they seek to explore various life options and gain confidence in their own identity and values, they face complex and conflicting expectations and experiences, while still maintaining hope about what is to come.

As emerging adults move through emerging adulthood and through this active exploratory phase, which is such an important part of emerging adulthood, career decision and commitment may be made with more confidence, compared to graduates who are just entering emerging adulthood. In emerging adulthood, the process of exploring and developing personal and vocational identity prepares graduates for making career decisions that are right for them and facilitates the transition from college to career (Staff et al., 2010). For example, emerging adults who take a *gap year* where they travel or work before attending college describe themselves as having more confidence,

maturity, and independence (King, 2011, p. 346). Further, these emerging adults describe themselves as being different selves than they were before the travel and work exploration of their gap year. This difference is indicative of transitioning towards adulthood (King, 2011). These and other experiences may aid in the understanding of the types of longer-term careers that may be of interest to them.

Therefore, the more advanced the graduate is in their emerging adulthood status, the more ready they will be to make longer-term career decisions that are in alignment with their identities (Arnett, 2000; Shulman et al., 2006) because they may have an increased level of self-efficacy. Graduates who are in the early stages of emerging adulthood, on the other hand, may not have moved through the identity exploration process that is helpful to developing strong career transition self-efficacy. If that is the case, it will be vital for colleges and universities to understand the impact of status in emerging adulthood on self-efficacy so they can be prepared to support the self-efficacy development of alumni in the early stages of emerging adulthood.

The study by Murphy et al. (2010) shows that exploration results in increased confidence of graduates. Specifically, participants indicated that the experience of moving through the transition from college to work increased their general sense of self-efficacy (Murphy et al., 2010). If the process of transitioning from college to work increases self-efficacy and, if exploration during emerging adulthood leads to increased confidence in career decisions and commitment, then it holds that the years following graduation may be ripe for the development of self-efficacy. During this time, career transition self-efficacy is a key measurement. The Murphy et al. study (2010) provides additional support that self-efficacy is vital in the transition process.

The current study sought to identify, specifically, how career transition self-efficacy may be impacted by a graduate's perceived adulthood status; or how career transition self-efficacy may be impacted when a graduate is early in their development through emerging adulthood, compared to a graduate in the later stage of emerging adulthood. A graduate in the early stages of emerging adulthood would have reached fewer milestones related to reaching adulthood and would feel like an adult less frequently. Someone who is in the later stage of emerging adulthood will have reached more of the milestones of adulthood and would more frequently consider her/himself to be an adult (Arnett, 2000).

The career search process is particularly important for recent graduate emerging adults because the first job is an important factor in future career status, earnings, and career path over time (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Drawing on knowledge gained from the Saks and Ashforth (1999) research, the current study sought to expand the work done related to general self-efficacy with a focus on the career transition self-efficacy of recent graduate emerging adults who are in the workforce or seeking employment.

The confluence of graduating from college and embarking on a career search during the already tumultuous time that is emerging adulthood makes this a vitally important and significant time for emerging adults. In addition, because colleges and universities are expected to take responsibility for graduates' successful entry into the world of work (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), the results of which can impact the perceived value of a college education, this time in graduates' lives is one that should be a major point of focus for institutions of higher education.

Careers and the Emerging Adult

The body of literature on the transition from college to career for emerging adults, which is a relatively new area of research, is limited. However, the topic is recognized as one on which additional research is needed (Arnett, 2004; Konstam & Lehmann, 2010; Murphy et al., 2010). The current study begins to bridge the gaps among bodies of research on career transition self-efficacy, the college to work transition, and emerging adulthood. There is much work to be done to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between this important stage of life and career development.

One study that specifically focuses on an emerging adult population and career development explores the roles of leisure and work engagement as they relate to career indecision in college graduate emerging adults (Konstam & Lehmann, 2010). Konstam and Lehmann (2010) identify the period of emerging adulthood as the most significant period of life for identity exploration, which impacts career choice and satisfaction. The authors posit that leisure activities represent an important way emerging adults "express and learn about themselves" (Konstam & Lehmann, 2010, p. 153) and that therefore, understanding leisure activities and preferences may complement an understanding of career choice and satisfaction. Further, the authors suggest that emerging adults who have clear preferences about leisure activities may be better able to make decisions about longer-term career preferences. Specifically, Konstam and Lehmann sought to answer the question of whether high levels of competence, control, and enjoyment related to leisure activities can be an indicator for determining career decisiveness in emerging adults.

The 64 participants in this study ranged in age from 25-30 and each participant held either an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree. Participants were surveyed using three different assessment instruments including the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire, the Leisure Diagnostic Battery, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that emerging adults who are indecisive about their careers are significantly less likely to report perceived freedom in leisure activities and less likely to report engagement at work (Konstam & Lehmann, 2010). This study provides interesting insight into the connection between emerging adulthood and the transition to work experience. In particular, the findings indicate that career decision challenges may have a broad impact on life experiences, including leisure activities.

Self-Efficacy and Career Development

Bandura defines perceived self-efficacy as a judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1982) postulates that self-efficacy is important because it impacts three major outcomes or behaviors, namely, (a) approach vs. avoidance, such that self-efficacy would lead to *choosing* or *approaching* a behavior rather than avoiding it; (b) level of performance such that self-efficacy would facilitate performance of a behavior; and (c) persistence, such that self-efficacy would lead to persistence of behaviors, in the face of challenges and obstacles (Bandura, 1982; Betz, N. E., 2007). People successfully perform and persist at behaviors that fall within their perceived self-efficacy, but avoid or fail at those behaviors that are beyond their perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Put another way, "an individual's judgments of

self-efficacy influence whether behavior will be initiated, the degree of effort that will be expended, and the length of time that a behavior will be maintained in the face of obstacles" (Luzzo, Funk, & Strang, 1996, p. 379). Further, the strength of efficacy predicts behavior change (Bandura, 1982).

Agency is closely tied to self-efficacy and exists when an individual acts in such a way as to intentionally influence and contribute to their life circumstances (Bandura, 2006). In speaking of the important role self-efficacy plays in agency, Bandura writes:

People make causal contributions to their own psychosocial functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. Efficacy belief, therefore, is a major basis of action. People guide their lives by their beliefs of personal efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment. The ability to secure desired outcomes and to prevent undesired ones, therefore, provides a powerful incentive for the development and exercise of personal control. The more people bring their influence to bear on events in their lives, the more they can shape them to their liking. By selecting and creating environmental supports for what they want to become, they contribute to the direction their lives take. (Bandura, 1997, pp. 2-3)

Bandura (1982) posits that self-efficacy has four primary sources: (a) performance accomplishments, or experiencing success when performing the behavior; (b) vicarious learning, or watching a behavior being performed successfully; (c) social persuasion, or

receiving verbal reinforcement of capacity to perform a certain behavior; and (d)

physiological arousal, or physical responses. According to Bandura (1982), these sources

should guide interventions aimed at building self-efficacy.

The idea of career development self-efficacy was introduced by Betz and Hackett

in a 1981 study that focused on the relationships between gender, career decision-making

self-efficacy, and the choice of traditional or non-traditional careers. Their goal was to

see if the underrepresentation of women in certain careers may be related to career

decision-making self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Participants in this study were

undergraduate college students who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course.

Two hundred and forty-five students completed a questionnaire that included information

and assessment in the following categories: demographics, self-efficacy, occupation

interests, and occupations considered. In addition, student scores on American College

Test (ACT) were obtained from the university for a majority of the students.

The research shows that women exhibited a significantly higher level of self-

efficacy for traditional female careers, and lower self-efficacy expectations for careers

that are non-traditional for females. This finding held, despite the similar levels of

achievement that existed between the male and female participants, as evidenced by ACT

scores (Betz & Hackett, 1981). In essence, the scope of career options students

considered was related to their perceived self-efficacy around academics and around

those occupations. This finding is important, as it demonstrates the potential limiting

impact low self-efficacy can have on occupational choice and, perhaps, on other

important transitional job search and vocational identity behaviors as well. Since Betz

and Hackett completed this 1981 study, self-efficacy research related to career development has expanded to include various career development topics.

Many of those studies look at the career search self-efficacy of current students (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Betz & Voyten, 1997; Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010; Lin & Flores, 2011; Maples & Luzzo, 2005; Paulsen & Betz, 2004; Yang & Gysbers, 2007), while few studies are dedicated to an alumni population. Prior to graduation, recent graduates may not be practicing the important career decision-making and job search behaviors as much as they will following graduation and as they continue through emerging adulthood, during which time they will gradually gain increased knowledge of their own identities. Therefore, understanding career decision-making self-efficacy after graduation, when graduates have begun looking for positions, is an important measure (Yang & Gysbers, 2007).

Impact of Interventions on Self-Efficacy

Of note is that much of the research on self-efficacy related to career development is designed with a direct purpose of informing practice and interventions that could serve to positively impact the self-efficacy of the group being studied. The dual focus of the current study was to 1) explore the relationships among status as an emerging adult college graduate, type of undergraduate institution, and self-efficacy, and 2) gain a deeper understanding of the emerging adult experience of transitioning from college to career. While the purpose of the current study was not to recommend practice outcomes directly, the potential applicability to practice that is inherent in self-efficacy research is an important consideration in the body of self-efficacy literature. For example, a study by

Grier-Reed and Skaar (2010) explored the relationship between career decision self-efficacy and participation in a constructivist career course.

For this quantitative study participants were 82 college students at a large Midwestern university. More than half of the participants were college freshman and 25% were college sophomores. Grier-Reed and Skaar used the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDMSE-SF) and the Career Decision Scale (CDS) as measures of self-efficacy. The assessments were administered on the first and last days of class. As a result of participation in the Constructivist Career Course, participants experienced an increase in career search self-efficacy (Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010). The Grier-Reed and Skaar study is important to the current research because it supports Bandura's theory (Bandura, 1982) that self-efficacy can be positively impacted by interventions that include Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982).

Additional research in this area has been done with other groups of college students. For example, Maples and Luzzo (2005) studied college students who had sought career counseling. They wanted to determine whether interventions including counseling sessions and DISCOVER would impact the students' career decision self-efficacy (using the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short form). They also wanted to see if the students' style toward career decision-making (using the Assessment of Attributions for Career Decision Making) would be impacted. An initial pre-test assessment was followed by a post-test assessment 10 to 14 days later, after the intervention was used. This study showed that the career search self-efficacy of participants increased following the use of DISCOVER as a career intervention, further supporting Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982).

Similar findings support the effective use of interventions to increase self-efficacy in a population of nontraditional college students who were over the age of 25. In their 1998 study, Foltz and Luzzo measured the career decision-making self-efficacy of 29 women and 37 men who were ages 26 to 54, both before and after their participation in a two-session career counseling workshop series. The students, who were enrolled in a large public university, expressed interest in the workshop after receiving a letter from the school about its availability. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. The Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSE) was used to measure self-efficacy. Following the workshop, participants in the experimental group measured significantly higher on the CDSE than they scored before treatment and also higher than the control group. Variations in age, gender, year in college, and family income were not significantly related to changes in the CDSE. The current study varies from the Foltz and Luzzo study in a couple of significant ways. First, the current study sought to understand whether age at graduation and status in emerging adulthood are predictors of career transition self-efficacy, while Foltz and Luzzo (1998) looked at the change in career decision-making self-efficacy as a result of a specific intervention. Second, the current study, in its mixed-method approach, provides a richer and deeper understanding of the transition process, including career transition self-efficacy of emerging adults who graduated from college at both traditional and non-traditional ages.

In their 1993 study, Eden and Aviram focused on whether general self-efficacy could be increased via training interventions in an adult population of unemployed workers. As with previous studies, the intervention used in this research incorporated

Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). The researchers wanted to learn whether reemployment would occur at a higher rate for individuals who participated in the training. The study included 66 unemployed adults who had been randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Participants completed surveys prior to beginning the workshop and again after completing all eight sessions of the two-week workshop. Additional follow up occurred two months later.

The findings of the study are related to the current study in a couple of ways. First, Eden and Aviram (1993) found that individuals with higher initial self-efficacy were more likely to secure positions and, second, that individuals whose self-efficacy increased following an intervention were also more likely to secure employment. Second, data showed that the training intervention was most beneficial to those participants who had a lower initial self-efficacy (Eden & Aviram, 1993). Knowing how career transition self-efficacy may change throughout the period of emerging adulthood will allow practitioners at colleges and universities to tailor interventions to emerging adults who need them the most.

Lin and Flores (2011) were also interested in Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy as effective intervention practices. However, rather than having participants engage in an intervention that was designed to include Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (1982), researchers surveyed participants on their perceptions of the levels of each of the four sources in their lives. Participants were East Asian international graduate students at a large Midwestern university. The 86 participants were all seeking employment in the United States and were scheduled to graduate within six months of the study. The mean age of the group was 27.6. The authors constructed their own

instrument for measuring perception of the levels of the four sources of self-efficacy in students' lives. They used the Career Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) for measuring career search self-efficacy. The instruments were distributed to participants via email.

From this study, significant positive correlations were found between job search self-efficacy and the outcome of job search behaviors. Specifically, participants who reported more experience with job search tasks and who received verbal support from family, friends, and faculty members, were more likely to report higher confidence in their ability to effectively perform tasks related to the job search process. Researchers recommend practical applications of these findings to include incorporation of the four sources of self-efficacy into career development work with international students. While this study was not approached from an emerging adult perspective, the participants fall into the age range included in emerging adulthood and viewing the research through the lens of this important developmental stage may yield additional understanding and insight.

Research on the impact of interventions on self-efficacy has also been completed with a high school student population. O'Brien, Bikos, Epstein, Flores, Dukstein, and Kamatuka (2000) used the Career Confidence Scale (CCS) to study whether a Career Exploration Program that was designed to increase students' performance accomplishments, a source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), would lead to an increase in career search self-efficacy for a group of high school students enrolled in an Upward Bound Summer Institute. Two groups of students participated. One group, made up of 22 students served as the treatment group and participated in the Career Exploration Program. Participants in this group ranged in age from 15-17 years old; the group was

comprised of 15 females and seven males. The second group of 26 students served as the

control group and did not participate in the Career Exploration Program as part of their

time in the Upward Bound Summer Institute. This group consisted of 15 females and 11

males each of whom were between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Most of the participants

in each group were African American, and most participants in each group planned to

attend college. Measurements of career-search self-efficacy were gathered at the start

and end of the program. The findings show that the students who participated in the

Career Exploration Program had significantly higher levels of career search self-efficacy

at the end of the program than the control group.

Self-Efficacy and Career Outcomes in a Job Seeker Population

Self-efficacy measures are important in various aspects of career development and

workforce performance. Self-efficacy as it relates to the career choice, career transition

and outcomes, and occupational success is of explicit interest to the current study. A key

area of self-efficacy research involves exploring how self-efficacy may be related to

behavior and outcomes. In a study conducted by Lubbers et al. (2005), college students

who were working full-time for a four-month period as part of a cooperative education

program at their Canadian university were surveyed to discern the relationships among

job-search self-efficacy, job-related affect, interpersonal work conflict, and job

characteristics. Questionnaires were administered six weeks after the start of the

employment term and again at the end of the 16-week employment term. One hundred

and ninety-five students completed both questionnaires, and the mean age of participants

was 21. Researchers found that job self-efficacy was significantly related to perceived

job performance and to positive job well-being. These findings may indicate that recent

graduates' development through emerging adulthood could be a factor that differentiates self-efficacy levels among young workers. Lubbers et al. (2005) suggest that further research include developing a greater understanding of self-efficacy differences that may exist among young workers.

Similarly concerned with the relationship of self-efficacy to well-being, Yang and Gysbers (2007) sought to understand the connections among career search self-efficacy, perceptions of career transition, and psychological distress in college students. Participants in Yang and Gysbers' study included 191 students at a large Midwestern university. Most of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian and there was a relatively equal distribution of males and females in the group. All participants were scheduled to graduate within one year. Instruments used in the study included the Career Search Efficacy Scale (CSES) for measuring career search self-efficacy, the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) to measure psychological distress, the Career Transition Inventory (CTI) to measure psychological resources, and the Behavioral Inhibition System and Behavioral Activation System (BIS/BAS) to assess regulatory focus. Students completed the assessments via a survey, with two participants randomly selected to receive $50 rewards.

One of the findings of the study indicated a correlation between career decision self-efficacy and psychological distress as follows: a lower career search self-efficacy combined with a higher level of psychological stress was correlated to a perceived lack of personal resources related to the transition process (Yang & Gysbers, 2007). During emerging adulthood, which has been identified as a time of potential distress, helping ensure a higher level of career-search self-efficacy may be particularly important to the

graduates' perception of having sufficient personal resources to navigate success in the world of work. As emerging adults gain confidence and knowledge related to their personal and vocational identities, the potential anxiety that can be associated with emerging adulthood may decrease, which could impact career search self-efficacy as well.

Eden and Aviram (1993) also found important and significant outcomes related to measures of self-efficacy. In their study of unemployed adults seeking work, participants with higher general self-efficacy were reemployed at a higher rate. Specifically, findings show that individuals with higher initial self-efficacy were more likely to secure positions and also, that individuals whose self-efficacy increased following an intervention designed around Bandura's (1982) four sources of self-efficacy were also more likely to secure employment. This study demonstrates the importance of understanding career decision-making self-efficacy in job seeking populations, including the way emerging adulthood may impact career decision-making self-efficacy. This knowledge will be of particular importance to college and universities as they continue their efforts to help ensure recent graduates land opportunities and maintain trajectories of success as they develop into adulthood.

The 1999 study by Saks and Ashforth explored the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search behaviors of recent college graduates through a longitudinal study. Soon-to-be graduates at a large urban university completed questionnaires right before graduation and again four months after graduation. The average age of the participants was 24.5, which is an age that is positioned right in the midst of emerging adulthood, and the average participant had two years of full-time work

experience. This study found that job search self-efficacy was positively related to job

search behaviors and was a significant predictor of preparatory job search behavior,

active job search behavior, and job search intensity (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). In essence,

this study shows that job-search self-efficacy is an important predictor of job search

behavior and outcomes and further, that behavior-specific measures of self-efficacy (like

career decision-making self-efficacy) are stronger predictors than assessments of general

self-efficacy (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Given these results, understanding how status in

emerging adulthood and age at college graduation impact career transition self-efficacy

of college graduates may be important to aiding alumni in obtaining positive job search

outcomes.

Self-Efficacy and Workforce Performance

Another area of self-efficacy study that is pertinent to this research is the impact

of self-efficacy on the workforce performance of employed individuals. Given that

attainment of employment is the goal of recent graduates involved in a job search, and

that the transition from college to work includes a successful transition into the culture

and ethos of the work environment, this area of inquiry is an important one to understand.

In a longitudinal study by Brown, Jones, and Leigh in 2005, researchers explored whether

self-efficacy may be impacted by *role overload* which is the experience of workers

feeling like they have inadequate resources to deal with the demands of their position

(Brown et al., 2005, p. 972). In addition, the study sought to explore the relationship

between self-efficacy and work performance more broadly.

Participants were adults who were employed as sales representatives. The

average age was 51 years, the average tenure was 16 years, and 81% of respondents were

males. Respondents completed multiple surveys that included measures of current and

past performance (in the form of sales volume), perceived organizational resources, sales

growth self-efficacy, personal goal data, and level of role overload over three consecutive

years. Researchers (Brown et al., 2005) found that in the absence of role overload, self-

efficacy is positively and significantly related to performance. However, role overload

has a significant negative impact on performance, self-efficacy, and goal-setting in that

when an employee expresses a sense of role overload, the relationship between self-

efficacy and performance becomes insignificant. In essence, the positive effects of

occupational self-efficacy are dependent on whether an employee perceives that they

have the resources that are necessary for their role.

     While the Brown et al. study (2005) looked at participants with an average of 16

years of experience in their fields, Kammeyer-Muller and Wanberg (2003) were

interested in the population of adults who were just entering into their chosen field. In

this 2003 study, researchers explored the adjustment process of entering a new

profession, or *newcomer adjustment* (Kammeyer-Muller & Wanberg, 2003, p. 779). In

particular, they wanted to know what is needed for a positive workforce adjustment and

defined level of newcomer adjustment success as related to organizational commitment,

work withdrawal, and turnover.

     Participants, whose average age was 33.3 years completed surveys during their

first month of employment and every four months thereafter, for a total of four survey

periods. Although participants were new to their current positions, they had an average

of nine years of professional experience. Following analysis of the data, researchers

reported that task mastery self-efficacy reduced worker withdrawal, and that both

pre-entry knowledge and disposition toward proactive behavior significantly impact a new worker's newcomer adjustment. On the topic of pre-entry knowledge, Kammeyer-Muller and Wanberg write, "Those who have accurate information about all aspects of the job will be better able to assess the extent to which they will *fit* in their new positions and will be in situations that better match their abilities and preferences compared with those who decided to take a job with poorer information (Kammeyer-Muller & Wanberg, 2003, p. 782).

This study is important to the current study for two main reasons. First, it provides additional support for the importance of self-efficacy as an impactful measure in career development and second, the study provides insight into the importance of pre-entry knowledge, which is a component of transition from college to career that will be particularly valuable with an emerging adult population. Pre-entry knowledge gathering occurs during the job exploration and search process, which for some graduates, occurs during college and continues after graduation. For other graduates, the exploration and search process may not begin until after graduation.

Because emerging adulthood is a time of personal and vocational identity exploration (Arnett, 2004), and because most emerging adult college graduates will change jobs several times during this developmental stage, pre-entry knowledge is particularly important.

A 1995 study by Alan M. Saks provides additional insight on the experience of transitioning into a career as an emerging adult. While Saks did not explicitly approach this study from an emerging adult perspective, the population studied falls into the age range that encompasses emerging adulthood. This longitudinal study looked at emerging

adults in career roles that were new to them; specifically it sought to understand the effects of self-efficacy on the relationship between training and new employee adjustment in the work place. The average age of participants in this study was 23.8 years of age and they had less than one year of experience on the job.

Self-efficacy has been shown to be related to training outcomes; specifically, self-efficacy related to task performance and training is considered an important component of new employee adjustment (Saks, 1995). Therefore, in this study, Saks sought to explore the relationships among initial self-efficacy, training, post-training self-efficacy, and work adjustment of college graduates who are new to a profession. One hundred and fifty four participants, who were all newly hired entry-level accountants at large firms, completed a questionnaire at the time of entry into the profession, and again six months later. Job performance data were obtained from personnel coordinators when participants had been in the profession for 10 months.

The findings show that initial self-efficacy was significantly correlated with ability to cope, with turnover, and with job performance. The study also showed that these relationships were more pronounced in those employees who had a low initial self-efficacy, making training most effective in aiding the adjustment of new employees when the employees entered the organization with low self-efficacy. This finding is insightful because it may be an indicator that changes in self-efficacy, more than overall level or strength of self-efficacy, may be an important factor to explore.

In an effort to discern the unique impact of self-efficacy, Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich (2007) performed a meta-analysis of self-efficacy and work performance studies, controlling for personality, intelligence, and experience level. Included in the

meta-analysis were studies that reported task or job specific self-efficacy measures as related to work performance outcomes.

Findings suggest that self-efficacy is significantly correlated with performance when the work task is low complexity. However, when the work task was medium or high complexity there was not a significant correlation to self-efficacy. Further, self-efficacy did not significantly predict performance in a number of other given scenarios. For example, self-efficacy did not predict performance when feedback was not provided, goals were not set, there was no prior experience with the task, or among postgraduate students or employed adults (Judge et al., 2007). Researchers postulate that the significance other research has attributed to self-efficacy may be due to individual differences in participants and that actually, the effect of self-efficacy is smaller than evidenced in the body of research to date. This research is contrasted with studies that have found self-efficacy to be a significant predictor of work performance (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Betz, 2007; Lubbers et al., 2005; Saks, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). The Judge et al. meta-analysis (2007) offers a different view of the level of impact that can be uniquely attributed to self-efficacy, yet it does not negate the importance and value of self-efficacy as a measure and as an indicator of performance.

In another meta-analytic review, Kanfer et al. (2001) looked at studies on job search behavior and employment outcomes. For their analysis, *job search* referred to a pattern of thinking, affect, and behavior that is measureable in terms of frequency, effort, activity, quality of activity, and persistence. Specifically, they analyzed relationships among variables including personality, expectations, motivation, socialization, biographical factors, job search behavior, and employment outcomes from 73 studies.

All but one of the studies focused on college students who were embarking on a job search associated with graduation from college. The study revealed several significant findings. First, job seekers with higher levels of self-esteem or job search self-efficacy reported higher levels of search behavior. Second, job search self-efficacy and self-esteem were significantly associated with a shorter length of unemployment. Third, job seekers who engaged in higher levels of job search behavior were more likely to obtain employment than those with lower levels of job search behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001). In other words, the amount of time and intensity spent on the job search impacts success such that the more time and intensity, the more likely it will be that a job seeker will secure employment and will do so in a shorter period of time (Kanfer et al., 2001).

These results, however, are moderated by additional findings that the effect of self-efficacy relates to job search behavior more strongly than it relates to obtaining employment (Kanfer et al., 2001). While these two meta-analytic reviews recommend a moderated view of the significance of self-efficacy to job search and work performance outcomes, according to Bandura and Locke (2003), nine different meta-analysis studies consistently show that self-efficacy contributes significantly to both motivation and performance within an organization.

The work of Abele and Spurk (2009) on the relationship between occupational self-efficacy and both objective and subjective career success serves to build a bridge between the literature on career search self-efficacy of college students and the literature on self-efficacy and work performance by providing insight on the connection between occupational self-efficacy of college graduates and future career success. In this 2009 longitudinal study, Abele and Spurk gathered survey responses from 734 professionals

who were employed full-time and who had completed graduate studies. Survey data

were initially collected immediately following their graduation from graduate school, at

which time their median age was 27 years. Additional survey data were gathered 18

months following graduation (median age of 28.5), 36 months after graduation (median

age 30 years), and lastly, at 85 months after graduation (median age of 34 years). The

instrument included items to assess occupational self-efficacy, career-advancement goals,

and objective (e.g. salary, hierarchy) and subjective (e.g. satisfaction) career success.

Researchers wanted to learn how occupational self-efficacy, career-advancement goals,

and career success were related over time.

After controlling for GPA, career industry, and gender, results show that

occupational self-efficacy has a positive influence on career satisfaction at a statistically

significant level. Abele and Spurk write, "individuals' occupational self-efficacy and

their career-advancement goals at career entry had an impact on salary, salary change, on

their hierarchical status, and on status change. The higher the participants' self-efficacy

and career goals had been at career entry, the more they earned and the higher was their

status later on" (Abele & Spurk, 2009, p. 60). They go on to state that "participants with

higher occupational self-efficacy at graduation were more satisfied with their careers

seven years later than those with lower occupational self-efficacy" (Abele & Spurk, 2009,

p. 60).

Abele and Spurk's study is important to the current study because Abele and

Spurk's study draws further connections among self-efficacy and both objective and

subjective career success. Understanding more about the self-efficacy levels of recent

graduates at various stages of emerging adulthood may have a significant impact on

strategies colleges and universities may employ to aid the transition from college to work for different groups of graduates. Very little is known about how the experience of moving through emerging adulthood as a college graduate may impact self-efficacy. In addition, because the college to work transition is such an important one in the life of a graduate and in the perception of the value of a college education, understanding more about how emerging adults perceive their ability to be successful in that transition is vital information. Lastly, there is very little self-efficacy research on college graduates from an emerging adulthood perspective. This study serves to add to the emerging research in this area.

Self-Efficacy in Career Choice

An instrument that is frequently used to measure self-efficacy related to career choice is the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSE). The CDSE was developed by Taylor and Betz (1983) and is designed to measure "an individual's degree of belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions" (Betz, 2007, p. 215). One line of career development self-efficacy research focuses on the relationship between career decision self-efficacy and career indecision. In their 1997 research, Betz and Voyten sought to understand the relationships among career indecision, self-efficacy, and perceived outcome expectations. Outcome expectations, with respect to career decision-making, are defined as "beliefs regarding the long-term consequences of success in specific educational or career decision-making behaviors" (Betz & Voyten, 1997, p. 181).

Betz and Voyten (1997) used the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form, the Career Decision Scale, and the Career Decision Making Outcome

Expectancies and Exploratory Intentions assessments as the primary instruments in their study. Participants were college students at a large Midwestern university who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course; 64% of the students were female and 36% were male; 16% of the students were minorities or international students. The assessments were administered in groups of 25 students at a time. Findings show that high levels of career decision-making self-efficacy are significantly related to lower levels of career indecision (Betz & Voyten, 1997). In other words, students with higher levels of career transition self-efficacy struggle with less indecision about their career choices.

Solberg, Good, Fischer, Brown, and Nord (1995) also looked at career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecision, with the added variable of human agency, which is characterized by a person's deliberate and proactive career search behavior patterns. The study sought to examine the relationship between career search self-efficacy and human agency and also to understand the nature of the relationships among career search self-efficacy, human agency, and career decisiveness. Participants were all college students. Participants completed a survey that included items assessing career decision self-efficacy measures, human agency measures, and career decisiveness measures. The data indicated that human agency and career search self-efficacy are significantly associated. Further, the study showed that beliefs in one's ability to perform career search tasks (career decision-making self-efficacy) may bridge the relationship between their sense of personal agency and their career decision. These results may inform practice by confirming the potential impact of career development work that focuses on enhancing client self-efficacy, which is dependent on knowing the level and

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strength of self-efficacy and on understanding the developmental components that may impact self-efficacy.

Looking at career decision-making self-efficacy in a different way, Paulsen and Betz (2004) wanted to learn how students' career decision-making self-efficacy may be related to self-efficacy of competencies that are commonly required as part of a liberal arts curriculum. The liberal arts competencies used in this study were leadership, mathematics, science, using technology, writing, and cultural sensitivity. Paulsen and Betz (2004) argued that career related self-efficacy is central to successful career outcomes and therefore, an important measure of research. One hundred and sixty-two undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large Midwestern university participated in this quantitative study. Eighty percent of the participants indicated they were Caucasian, and 80% were freshmen students at the institution. Participants completed assessments of confidence, or self-efficacy, in classroom groups of 25-60 participants at a time. The Expanded Skills Confidence Inventory (ESCI) and the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Short Form (CDMSE-SF) were the instruments used in this study. The results showed that self-efficacy in each of the six competency areas was a significant predictor of career decision-making self-efficacy and that of all the competency areas, *Leadership* was the most important predictor. From this study, Paulsen and Betz recommended that colleges focus on strengthening students' efficacy beliefs through specific interventions. This study is important to the topic of career transition self-efficacy in emerging adulthood because it sets the stage for self-efficacy around career choice as an important vehicle for graduate success.

Conclusion

Self-efficacy is a measure that has been shown to lead to positive behaviors and outcomes related to the career search (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Betz, 2007; Lubbers et al., 2005; Saks, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1999) and so has the potential to be an important measure for colleges and universities who are committed to supporting their emerging adult graduates.

> Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation in several ways: They determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures. When faced with obstacles and failures, people who harbor self-doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up quickly. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities exert greater effort when they fail to master the challenge. Strong perseverance usually pays off in performance accomplishments. (Bandura, 1993, p. 131)

Research shows that career search self-efficacy is a construct that predicts career search outcome (Yang & Gysbers, 2007).

Graduation from college is a time when many young people make a significant commitment to a career search process and hold expectations that significant work changes will occur in their lives. In conjunction with facing a challenging transition from college life to the world of work, recent college graduates face additional significant transitions as emerging adults. The experience of graduating from college while simultaneously developing as emerging adults adds greater significance, import, and challenge to the transition experience. College graduation is a time, for many, to step

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into the world of work and make career decisions. Yet, emerging adulthood is a time of exploration and trying out different vocational and personal identities, which is often expressed through multiple employment experiences (Arnett, 2004). The goals of these two distinct life experiences are sometimes at odds. The level and amount of development, transition, career change, and exploration during emerging adulthood and the transition from college to work is higher than at any other period of life.

The stage of emerging adulthood at which one graduates from college may have an impact on career transition self-efficacy. Given that emerging adulthood is a time when college graduates make significant life decisions and a time that can be fraught with anxiety and indecision, learning more about the self-efficacy of emerging adult college graduates will aid the understanding of this life stage and its impact on college and university strategies for supporting graduates.

Because self-efficacy is a predictor of behavior, emerging adults with higher levels of self-efficacy around their career search will be more likely to engage in career search behaviors such as developing and implementing a career plan, and more likely to see success in their search (Bandura, 1982). Understanding the career transition self-efficacy of college graduates throughout emerging adulthood and, understanding the career transition self-efficacy of alumni who graduated from different types of institutions, will help colleges and universities gain insight as to the impact these transitions may have on graduates. In addition, this knowledge may inform strategies colleges and universities can implement to support emerging adults in their transitions. Because significant job search activities occur at graduation, while many graduates are in the stage of emerging adulthood, colleges and universities need to help ensure career

transition self-efficacy is as high as possible at that time, regardless of their stage in emerging adulthood.

It seems possible, for example, that a graduate who is in the early stages of emerging adulthood may possess lower self-efficacy about their ability to perform tasks related to the career choice and transition processes because they are still exploring the many facets of who they are and because they are still trying on different life choices. Alternately, graduates who are in the later stages of emerging adulthood may have a clearer self-knowledge, and more life experience, to support the development of their career transition. Likewise, it seems possible that the choice of public or private undergraduate institution attended may impact a graduate's self-efficacy on these processes. A student who graduates from a public institution where the curriculum may be focused on helping students prepare for the world of work after college, may develop a higher career transition self-efficacy compared to students graduating from small, private institutions where the focus may not be on developing career transition self-efficacy. On the other hand, small private institutions with the more intimate settings and closer faculty and administrator relationships (White, 2003), may be better equipped to help students develop their career transition self-efficacy. This research sheds light on these unique experiences and the role these scenarios may play in graduates' levels of career transition self-efficacy.

Lubbers et al. (2005) posit that young workers may be more mentally invested in their work because they are trying on different careers and jobs in an effort to find a career that suits them long-term. Therefore, it seems possible that this stage of career exploration and discovery, which occurs at graduation from college and throughout

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emerging adulthood, may have an impact on career transition self-efficacy as well. Further, because there is a great deal at stake during this stage of vocational identity exploration, experiences that are perceived by emerging adults as negative may have a particularly detrimental impact on self-efficacy (Lubbers et al., 2005). Given that self-efficacy has been shown to be an indicator of both career search behaviors and career outcomes (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Betz, 2007; Kanfer et al., 2001; Lubbers et al., 2005; Saks, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Yang & Gysbers, 2007), the question is how the considerable exploration and change that takes place during emerging adulthood may further impact the transition from college to career. An additional question is whether the choice of attending a private or public college may also be a factor in the development of career transition self-efficacy.

The current study expands the scope of research on career transition self-efficacy from students to the realm of emerging adult college graduates. This research also fills the gap among three bodies of literature, specifically, literature on emerging adulthood, the college to work transition, and self-efficacy related to career choice, transition, and success. The following chapter will describe the methodology followed in the course of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into subsections that include Introduction; Research

Design; Participants; Instrumentation; Development of Instruments; Procedure;

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations; Timeframe; and a Summary. This chapter

will provide a brief background for the stated research problem and will describe the

research questions and purpose. A detailed description of the chosen research

methodology and design is included. Instrumentation, data collection, and analysis are

provided in detail sufficient to allow future researchers to replicate this study. Statistical

tests that were used are listed and analysis processes for qualitative data are also

described.

The purpose of this mixed-method convergent study, consisting of surveys and

interviews, was to explore the relationships among self-efficacy, perceived adulthood

status, and type of institution attended so that colleges and universities may have a better

understanding of the unique and challenging transition experience of emerging adult

college graduates. This study serves as a foundation of information regarding the

transition while bridging the space among existing bodies of literature on the topics of

emerging adulthood, career transition self-efficacy, and the college to work transition.

Insight on this topic may help colleges and universities begin to recognize ways to

support the college to work transition of recent graduate emerging adults.

In exploring the intersection among the transition from college to work, the unique

developmental stage of emerging adulthood, and career transition self-efficacy, this study

was guided by the following research question: What is the relationship between

emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy of recent college graduates? In

addition, there are four sub-questions addressed by this study:

- What is the effect of perceived adulthood status on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of age at graduation on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of gender on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of type of institution attended on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

Research Design

A mixed-method convergent research design was selected for this study because

incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies allowed for a more

thorough understanding of the experience (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) of

transitioning from college to work while simultaneously developing through emerging

adulthood. The qualitative methodology allowed for deeper understanding of the

individual experiences of transitioning from college to life after college during emerging

adulthood, while the quantitative methodology provided data to help understand

predictors of career transition self-efficacy for the larger population. The European

Group for Integrated Social Research (2001) argues for mixed-method research designs

specifically when exploring research problems related to *young adults* (European Group

for Integrated Social Research, 2001, p. 113) because of the need to incorporate the broad

understanding that can be gained from quantitative research methodologies side by side

with the more personal, nuanced understanding that comes from hearing individual

voices. Further, qualitative research has emerged as an important approach in the study

of career development, allowing for additional insight and implications and has been

"pivotal in expanding the horizons of issues and problems within vocational psychology"

(Blustein et al., 2005, p. 352).

The convergent design, in which qualitative and quantitative aspects of the

methodology are employed simultaneously and analyzed separately before a combined

analysis (see Figure 1), is utilized for studies when there is a desire for a more complete

understanding of a topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The complex nature of the

simultaneous experiences of the college to work transition in conjunction with the

developmental progression through emerging adulthood, which incorporates vocational

and personal identity exploration, demanded a qualitative methodology in order to ensure

that the participant voice is heard in obtaining an understanding of the problem (Creswell,

2007).
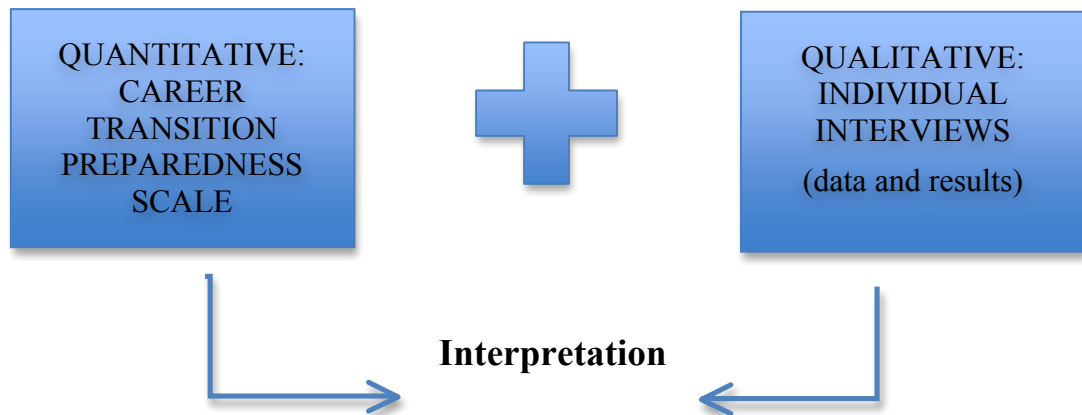
Figure 1. Research design utilized in this study.

The quantitative component of the research utilized hierarchical block-entry method multiple regression analysis to identify possible predictors of career transition self-efficacy. Multiple regression was an appropriate statistical procedure for this study because there were multiple predictor variables (Field, 2009) including type of undergraduate institution, age at graduation, gender, and four variables related to status in adulthood. The outcome variables for this study are represented by the four domains measured by the career transition self-efficacy instrument, called the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory,* including self-efficacy related to 1) Navigating Work Responsibilities, 2) Developing a Support Network, 3) Progressing in Chosen Career Path, and 4) Understanding Workplace Culture. To correct for Type 1 error rate inflation that can occur when performing multiple analyses, the Bonferroni Correction was utilized.

For the qualitative component of the research, a narrative approach was used. The use of a narrative approach allowed participants to tell their stories and allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experience (Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2009). In this design, the researcher identified participants and created initial interview questions to gain an understanding of the participant's experience with the research topic. Data collected included interview transcripts, researcher notes, and participant feedback. Following the review and analysis of data, during which the researcher organized data in a chronological format, the researcher and each participant collaborated on the development of the individual participant's narrative story. The narratives are presented as the qualitative results for the study. In addition, in the final

data analysis, narratives from all interview participants were analyzed together to identify

themes and patterns in experiences, which are also presented in Chapter 4.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of graduates of private and public four-

year colleges and universities in Pennsylvania who were between the ages of 18 and 29

and who graduated within four years prior to the study.

Sample

Sample selection occurred using purposive sampling (Gay et al., 2009). Four

colleges and universities in Pennsylvania were selected based on the researcher having

access to the institutions while ensuring that the sample included both public and private

institutions. The institutions included in this study included two private colleges and two

public universities. The undergraduate population of the colleges and universities ranged

from approximately 1,500 students to 13,000 students.

For three of the participating institutions, alumni between the ages of 18 and 29

who graduated within the last four years and whose email address was on file at their

alma mater received an email requesting their participation in the study. Because access

to this population was secured via the college and university alumni directories, the

sample included only graduates who provided their email addresses to their alma mater

and who were included in the directory. The fourth institution did not send emails to

participants directly, but rather, sent the survey link to alumni via a monthly electronic

newsletter.

For the qualitative component of the study, a question asking respondents if they

would be willing to participate in an interview as part of this research study was included

in the survey questionnaire that was distributed to all members of the sample. At the end

of the survey period a search was performed on Qualtrics to identify the completed

surveys of respondents who indicated that they were willing to be interviewed for this

study. Questionnaires from these respondents were analyzed for levels of career

transition self-efficacy, perceived adulthood status, type of institution attended, and age at

graduation. Results for each category, for each respondent, were entered into an excel

spreadsheet. Within the spreadsheet, respondents were identified by a Qualtrics

generated identification number rather than by personally identifiable information. From

this spreadsheet, a diverse group of interview candidates were selected and contacted to

schedule an interview. Outreach was completed in sets of five to seven emails at a time.

Alumni who responded were scheduled for an interview. If there was not response to the

interview request, emails were sent to additional respondents until interviews were

completed with 10 participants. The sample selection was purposive in order to obtain a

sample that included a variety of institutions, types of institutions, stages of perceived

adulthood, and self-efficacy levels.

Size, Demographics, Variables

Sample size of the quantitative component of this research was 1,225 participants,

significantly larger than the recommended number for multiple regression analysis, to

allow attainment of a high level of power with four predictor variables, when at least a

small effect is expected (Field, 2009). Emails were sent to 11,273 alumni who had

graduated in the last four years from three of the participating institutions. The fourth

institution did not send emails directly to alumni, but sent the survey link to all alumni

via their monthly e-newsletter. Interviews were conducted with10participants, a number

of participants that Gay et al. (2009) identify as appropriate to qualitative research; this number also exceeds the number of participants discussed by Creswell (2007) and provided for purposeful diversity in the sample. A total of 57 survey participants were contacted for an interview and 10 interviews were conducted.

Instrumentation

This study used the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale* (Appendix A), developed by the author. The scale was designed to measure perceived adulthood status and career transition self-efficacy through the use of two subscales. The subscales included the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* (Appendix A), which measures career transition self-efficacy and the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* (Appendix A), which measures perceived adulthood status. Both of the sub-scales were created by the author.

Career Transition Appraisal Inventory

The *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* is a 38-item inventory that measures career transition self-efficacy. Four domains are captured within the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* including (a) Navigating Work Responsibilities, (b) Developing a Support Network, (c) Progressing in Chosen Career Path, and (d) Understanding Workplace Culture. The instrument uses a 4-point Likert scale such that 0 represents *no confidence* and 3 represents *complete confidence* with options 1 and 2 representing points between *no confidence* and *complete confidence*, with the intervals between numbers are equal.

Participants were asked to rate their level of confidence in performing 38 different activities related to career transition. Sample items include, "Ask for help when you need

it," "Accurately assess your own performance," and "Demonstrate socially acceptable workplace behavior." See Table 1 for the assessment item breakdown by domain.

Table 1

Career Transition Appraisal Inventory Assessment Item Breakdown by Domain

	Domain			
	Navigating Work Responsibilities	Developing a Support Network	Progressing in Chosen Career Path	Understanding Workplace Culture
# of Inventory Items	13	7	9	9

Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory

The *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* is a four-item inventory that uses a 4-point Likert scale such that 0 represents *no* and 3 represents *definitely*. Scale points 1 and 2 represent points between *no* and *definitely*, and the intervals between numbers are equal. Items were draw from the review of literature. Sample items include "Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?" and "Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?" (Arnett, 2000; Atak, 2012)

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic section was included at the end of the assessment. Respondents selected, from a drop down menu, responses to the following prompts: What is the name of the college or university you attended, name, current age, at what age did you graduate from the college or university above, and gender. The last item on the instrument asks participants to respond, via a drop down menu, to a prompt that reads, "Are you willing

to be contacted to participate in an interview related to this study?" Those who respond "yes" to that prompt are requested to provide their email address and phone number so they can be contacted to schedule an interview.

Development of Instruments

The interview protocol and demographic questionnaire were developed based on the research question for this study. The *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* was developed from questions drawn from the work of Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2000) to identify how emerging adults classify themselves related to key areas of emerging adulthood including whether they perceive themselves to be adult, attainment of financial independence, and having a strong sense of their personal and vocational identities.

The *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* was developed following Bandura's guidelines for creating self-efficacy scales (2006). First, from a review of literature focused on career transitions, primary self-efficacy domains were identified. Second, for each domain a series of activities were identified and inventory items designed. Each item was constructed to specifically measure perceived self-efficacy, as unique from other constructs such as locus of control and outcome expectations. Third, the items were mapped to their specific domain (Appendix B). Fourth, items within the inventory were randomly ordered. Lastly, the instrument followed additional guidelines suggested by Bandura including (a) avoiding the use of "self-efficacy" in the instrument title, (b) including a sample item, and (c) incorporating instructions that clearly state that participants should respond to the items with their level of confidence that they can perform these activities "as of right now" (Bandura, 2006, p. 312).

Validity and Reliability

The content and construct validity of the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* were determined by asking a panel of self-efficacy experts to review the instrument and comment on whether items on the assessment address career transition self-efficacy and whether the represented domains were appropriate. Emails (Appendix C) were sent to nine self-efficacy researchers whose research was part of the literature review for this study. The emails included a copy of the instrument and a document outlining the intended domains and contributing literature for the scale. Three experts responded with feedback on the instrument. Feedback included suggested language modifications for individual items, the addition of three items, and a suggestion to include definitions for each domain. This feedback was incorporated into the instrument prior to the commencement of the study. One of the expert respondents suggested that domains be identified and grouped together in the assessment. This feedback was not incorporated into the instrument because it contradicts Bandura's guide to creating self-efficacy scales (2006), which states that items should be randomly ordered. An additional response was received from an expert panelist following the commencement of the study. Because the study was already in the data collection phase, feedback from this respondent was not incorporated into the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument was analyzed in SPSS. Cronbach's Alpha was determined and reported for total career transition self-efficacy and for each of the four career transition self-efficacy domains including Developing a Support Network, Navigating Work Responsibilities, Progressing in a Chosen Career Path, and Understanding Workplace Culture.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted for the quantitative component of this study with 28 alumni who received Bachelor's degrees from four-year institutions. Participants for the pilot study were selected using snowball sampling from alumni known by the researcher then recommended to the researcher by participants. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 and graduated from their undergraduate institutions within the four years prior to the pilot study.

Potential pilot study participants were contacted via email (Appendix D) requesting their participation in the study. The email contained a link to the Qualtrics form that is used to obtain informed consent (Appendix E), and that houses the demographic questionnaire and assessment instrument (Appendix A). Pilot respondents were also asked to share feedback related to the instrument and the feedback received was used to modify the survey instrument. For example, pilot respondents identified that the instrument did not work well on mobile devices. Modifications were made to the instrument to allow for mobile compatibility. Additional pilot participants confirmed that the instrument was accessible via mobile device.

Procedure

Approval by the Institutional Review Boards at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and Indiana University of Pennsylvania were obtained prior to beginning research and is included in Appendix F. The researcher contacted each selected institution via email, asking permission to survey their alumni for this study (Appendix G). Written permission to survey alumni was granted by each of the institutions.

Data Collection

Three of the participating schools provided email addresses and names for alumni from their institution who had graduated within the last four years (2010-2014). The email addresses and names were entered into Qualtrics. Personalized, individual emails (Appendix D) were sent to each of the alumni by the researcher, using the Qualtrics email system. The email contained a URL link to the instrument, the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale*. The fourth institution did not provide email addresses and did not send individual emails to alumni. Rather, the institution shared the URL link to the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale* via an electronic newsletter for alumni, which is emailed to all alumni each month. The link contained in the newsletter leads to a form that contains informed consent language and instructions, The *Career Transition Preparedness Scale* (consisting of the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory*, *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory)*, and a demographic questionnaire. This form was housed on the web-based survey system, Qualtrics, which was accessed from an email link included in the outreach email – or in the case of one institution, via a link in the alumni newsletter. One question in the demographic section asked whether participants were willing to be contacted for a possible interview, in follow up to the completion of the questionnaire. During the 10-week data collection period, a follow up email was sent to each alumnus/a who had not yet completed the survey, to increase sample size.

The data collection for the qualitative component of the study began four-weeks into the survey period and continued for six weeks. For the group of participants who agreed to be contacted for a possible interview, a review of career transition self-efficacy and perceived adulthood status was conducted. Respondents who agreed to be

interviewed were categorized based on the following criteria: (a) attended private undergraduate institution, (b) attended public undergraduate institution, (c) assessment showed low career transition self-efficacy, (d) assessment showed high career transition self-efficacy, (e) assessment showed low perceived adulthood status, (f) assessment showed high perceived adulthood status, (g) age at graduation, (h) current age, and (i) gender. From these categories, graduates were selected using a purposive sampling process with a goal of obtaining a sample that included participants from different types of four-year institutions who were in various stages of perceived adulthood and who had varying levels of career self efficacy, varying ages and varying ages at graduation. The interviewer emailed the selected participants to schedule an interview (see Appendix D). Interviews took place by phone or in person and followed the attached interview protocol (Appendix H). The interview protocol included questions related to career transition self-efficacy and the experience of transitioning from college to career during emerging adulthood. Sixteen interviews were scheduled and 10 took place. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Following the interview, participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts, share additional information, and clarify statements made.

During the interview process, the researcher took notes on observations and researcher thoughts during the interview process. These researcher notes were included as data for the study. Participants were invited to share any additional documents or other forms of data that would be helpful to understanding their experiences transitioning from college to career as an emerging adult.

Data Analysis

For this research project, the dependent (outcome) variable was career transition self-efficacy, which consisted of several distinct domains including (a) Navigating Work Responsibilities, (b) Developing a Support Network, (c) Progressing in Chosen Career Path, and (d) Understanding Workplace Culture. Independent (predictor) variables included perceived adulthood status, age at graduation, gender, and type of undergraduate institution (public or private) attended. Self-reporting was utilized to gather data.

Following data collection, career transition self-efficacy and perceived adulthood status were scored using participant responses to the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale*. The dataset was reviewed and data for participants who reported that their current age was outside the range of this study (18-29) were removed from analysis. Also removed from the analysis were survey responses with incomplete, missing, or unclear data. Data were entered into SPSS, which was used for all statistical analyses. Summary statistics were calculated and tabled for all variables, and correlations between the dependent variables were computed. There was no multicollinearity between independent variables. A hierarchical block entry method was chosen to reflect the importance of the predictor variables (Field, 2009). The first block included the following predictor variables: (a) feeling of adulthood, (b) financial independence, (c) concept of personal and vocational identity, and (d) long-term satisfying work. The second block added the predictor variable of age at graduation. The third block added the predictor variable of college type. The fourth block added the predictor variables of gender and current age.

Five independent multiple regression analyses were performed including one for each of the four career transition self-efficacy domains and one analysis for the overall

career transition self-efficacy score. The Bonferroni correction was employed to protect against Type 1 error rate inflation (Field, 2009). To accomplish this correction, the initial level of significance (.05) was divided by the number of analyses performed (five) resulting in a new level of significance of .01 for the each of the five models. Thus, the level of significance for all statistical tests was maintained at .05.

The qualitative portion of this study utilized a narrative methodology of data analysis. Key components of narrative research include transcribing data and identifying important elements, followed by "restorying" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 388), in which data are analyzed and reorganized chronologically. The researcher analyzed data including interview transcripts and researcher notes, and then organized the data into a *story* of the participant's experience. The researcher engaged with the participant to finalize the narrative account, ensuring alignment between what the participant shared and what the researcher understood and communicated back (Gay et al., 2009).

Following the data analysis process that occurred with each participant, the researcher analyzed the narratives of all 10 participants to identify themes and patterns of experience. As a final step in the data analysis process, the qualitative and quantitative components of the study were analyzed together for the final interpretation of the study.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

There are several delimitations to this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the sample was not random and, therefore, no generalizations can be made beyond the institutions of higher education that were sampled. Purposeful sampling was chosen for this study instead of random sampling to ensure the sample included both public and private institutions and that the researcher had access to the institutions. Second, the

study was limited to four-year institutions and did not look at populations of people who did not graduate from college or those who graduated from two-year institutions. Third, email correspondence was used to solicit participants, which limited the sample to those alumni who regularly access email.

Limitations to this study include: (a) the study compared graduates with a variety of diverse life experiences, and did not attempt to control for other potential causes for results of the study; and (b) the study relied on graduates' self-report of self-efficacy beliefs and perceived adulthood status.

In addition to limitations and delimitations, this study made certain assumptions. It was assumed that participants honestly assessed the perception of their level of self-efficacy and their status in adulthood. This study also assumed that colleges have a significant role in preparing students for successfully transitioning from college to career in the period following graduation. Lastly, the study assumed that the fidelity of the instruments used in the study was accurate, based on research.

Timeframe

Quantitative data collection occurred over a 10-week period from May 2014 to August 2014. Qualitative data collection occurred over a six-week period from June 2014 to August 2014. Follow up emails were sent to participants to increase overall participation.

Summary

This mixed-method study explored the relationships among career transition self-efficacy, perceived adulthood status, type of undergraduate institution attended, and the experience of transitioning from college to work of emerging adult recent college

graduates in Pennsylvania. Research methods included a quantitative component

utilizing an instrument to measure career transition self-efficacy and status as an

emerging adult, as well as a qualitative component utilizing a narrative approach that

included participant interviews, researcher notes, and participant-shared written materials

in data collection. In Chapter 4, data analysis and summaries that include findings related

to both the quantitative and qualitative components are presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to better understand the experience of

emerging adult college graduates (aged 18-29) who have begun the transition from

college to career in the four years prior to this study. Specifically, this study sought to

answer the research question: What is the relationship between emerging adulthood and

career self-efficacy of recent college graduates? In addition, there were four sub-

questions addressed by this study:

- What is the effect of perceived adulthood status on the career transition self-
  efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of age at graduation on the career transition self-efficacy of
   emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of gender on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging
   adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of type of institution attended on the career transition self-
   efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

In answering these questions, the quantitative component of the research looked at

four primary domains of career transition self-efficacy and used multiple regression

analysis to determine whether variables including type of college, age, age at graduation,

gender, or perception of adulthood status are predictors of career transition self-efficacy.

The qualitative component of this study sought to better understand the transition

experience by hearing the stories of 10 emerging adults who had graduated from an

undergraduate institution in Pennsylvania in the last four years.

Survey Participation

A total of four Pennsylvania institutions of higher education participated in the study. Two of the participating schools were private institutions and two were public institutions. Participants were individuals who graduated from one of the four Pennsylvania colleges and universities included in this study. The survey instrument was sent to 11,273 graduates from three participating Pennsylvania colleges and universities, who had graduated within the four years prior to the study. Each of these schools provided email addresses for their graduates and the researcher sent individual emails directly, via Qualtrics to each alumnus/a.

From School A, a public university, 6,296 graduates received individual email invitations and 506 of those graduates responded to the survey, a response rate of 8.0%. From School B, a private college, 3,186 graduates received individual email invitations and 388 graduates responded to the survey, a response rate of 12.2%. From School C, a private university, 1,791 graduates received individual email invitations and 416 graduates responded to the survey, a response rate of 23.2%. For the fourth participating school, there were challenges in accessing the graduates' emails directly. The university originally agreed to share the email addresses of alumni, but before the start of the study opted not to provide addresses or to send emails on behalf of the researcher. Therefore, for School D, none of the graduates received individualized email invitations. In lieu of individual emails, the link to the survey instrument was sent via electronic newsletter to all alumni from School D. Only five graduates from School D completed the survey for this study.

Overall, graduates from private colleges responded in higher numbers than those from public colleges. The average response rate for the two private colleges (Schools B and C) combined was 16.2%, compared to a response rate of 8.0% from graduates of the public institution (School A). Of the 11,273 graduates who received the email, 2,912 participants started the survey and 1,315 completed the survey. Sixty-three survey results were eliminated because the participants' current age was outside that of emerging adulthood (18-29), leaving a total of 1,252 responses. An additional 28 responses were eliminated from the multiple regression analyses due to missing, incomplete, or unclear data. The total number of participants included in the multiple regression analyses for this study was 1,225.

Of this group, 520 participants responded that they agreed to be interviewed for the study. Emails were sent to a total of 57 potential interview participants, in batches of five to seven emails at a time, resulting in 10 interviews being conducted. A total of 17 interviews were scheduled overall, and there were seven instances where the interviewee did not keep the appointment. Interview participants were selected purposefully. The researcher reviewed the demographic and assessment scores of all the participants who agreed to be interviewed and chose graduates who were diverse in terms of type of institution attended, age, age at graduation, gender, career transition self-efficacy levels, and perceived adulthood status. The purposeful nature of this sampling process allowed for a more complete picture of the transition experience of different emerging adult graduates.

Demographic Information

Data were collected on demographic variables including current age, age at graduation from undergraduate institution, name of college or university, and gender. Participants completed this demographic section of the survey after completing the assessment component. The majority of respondents were females who graduated from private colleges and in fact, there were more than twice as many female respondents (70% of the sample) as there were males. The most frequently occurring current age for the sample was 24 and the most frequently occurring age at graduation for the sample was 22. The most frequently occurring graduation age is not surprising because this age is representative of the traditional high school to college trajectory in which students graduate high school at approximately 18 years of age and continue directly into a four-year college, graduating at approximately 22 years of age. There were only 28 participants who graduated at the age of 25 or older, representing the later ages of emerging adulthood. This lower proportion of older emerging adults was expected because graduating college at the age of 25 or older is relatively less common (White, 2003). Appendix I provides additional information about age at graduation for participants. Despite the lower number of responses from this age range, this group is important to the current study in terms of understanding the transition experience of graduates throughout the emerging adult years.

For the qualitative component of this study, interview participants ranged in age from 21 to 28 and their age at graduation from their undergraduate institution ranged from 21 to 25. Five males and five females were interviewed. Six interviews were conducted with graduates from public universities, and four interviews were conducted

with graduates of private colleges and universities. Based on results from the assessments, one interviewee scored low on career transition self-efficacy, four scored high on career transition self-efficacy, and five scored in the mid-range for career transition self-efficacy. Three scored low in perceived adulthood, four scored high in perceived adulthood, and three scored in the mid-range for perceived adulthood.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument, the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale,* was created by the author and consists of two instruments, the *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* which measures career transition self-efficacy, and the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory,* which measures the extent to which an individual sees himself or herself as an adult. The *Career Transition Appraisal Inventory* measures four domains of career transition self-efficacy including: (a) Navigating Work Responsibilities, (b) Developing a Support Network, (c) Progressing in Chosen Career Path, and (d) Understanding Workplace Culture. The domains were drawn from a review of self-efficacy and career transition literature (Appendix B). Once the instrument was created, the items were ordered randomly and then item numbers were mapped to each domain. Reliability for each domain and for total career transition self-efficacy was analyzed in SPSS. Table 2 shows the item mapping and reliability for each domain.

Table 2

Career Transition Appraisal Inventory Domains and Reliability

Factor	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Navigating Work Responsibilities	1, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 20 21, 24, 25, 31, 33, 35	.91
Developing a Support Network	5, 8, 14, 27, 29, 32, 34	.76
Progressing in Chosen Career Path	2, 3, 11, 18, 19, 22, 23, 28, 36	.87
Understanding Workplace Culture	4, 6, 7, 12, 15, 26, 30, 37, 38	.84

Cronbach's Alpha for the individual domains and for the full 42-item instrument were strong. In particular, the total instrument reliability was .95 and the Cronbach's Alpha for the domain of Navigating Work Responsibilities was .91, also a very high reliability level. These levels indicate a strong likelihood that results would be consistent if the study were repeated.

Statistical Tests

Hierarchical blocked-entry multiple regression analysis was used for this study. Multiple regression was an appropriate test choice because this study sought to predict an outcome variable (career transition self-efficacy) from multiple predictor variables (Field, 2009) including age at graduation, current age, type of college attended, gender, and four components of perceived adulthood. For this study, career transition self-efficacy was derived from four primary domains: (a) Navigating Work Responsibilities, (b) Developing a Support Network, (c) Progressing in a Chosen Career Path, and (d)

Understanding Workplace Culture, each of which were shown in literature (Liptak, 2010; Murphy et al., 2010) to be important components of a successful college to career transition.

A separate multiple regression analysis was completed for each of the four domains and another analysis was completed for the total career transition self-efficacy scores, for a total of five analyses. To protect against the Type 1 error rate inflation that is possible when running several multiple regression analyses on the same data, the Bonferroni Correction was employed (Field, 2009).

Correlations

The correlations between variables justified using the Bonferroni Correction for determining significance, which protected against Type 1 error rate inflation. To employ the Bonferroni Correction, a .05 level of significance was divided by the total number of dependent variables, representing the number of individual multiple regression analyses performed, which was five (one for each of the four domains and one for the total career transition self-efficacy scores). Given the Bonferroni Correction, a significance level of .01 was used to determine significance of the overall model. Because the correlations between predictors were lower than .9, this indicates that there is no multicollinearity in the data (Field, 2009). Table 3 shows correlations for outcome variables.

Table 3

Intercorrelations Between Dependent Variables

	WorkResp	Support	Path	Culture
WorkResp	--	*.68****	*.79****	*.82****
Support		--	*.65****	*.74****
Path			--	*.71****
Culture				--

Note. WorkResp = Navigating Work Responsibilities; Support = Developing a Support Network; Path = Progressing in Chosen Career Path; Culture = Understanding Work Culture. N = 1252 for all correlations.
***p < .001.

Descriptive Statistics

Career Transition Appraisal Inventory

Data show that the standard deviations for each of the domains are small, relative to the mean, indicating that the mean accurately represents the results of the study (Field, 2009). The domain for which participants scored the lowest self-efficacy levels was in Progressing in a Chosen Career Path, whereas Understanding Workplace Culture resulted in the highest levels of self-efficacy for participants (see Table 4). It may be that participants perceive progressing in a chosen career path as a longer-term endeavor compared to understanding workplace culture, which could impact the participants' perceptions of their own self-efficacy.

The highest possible assessment score for each domain was 4.0, corresponding with the descriptor *complete confidence*. The data indicate that the overall career

transition self-efficacy of participants was relatively high, with all domains having a mean score over 3.0.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

VARIABLE	M	SD	95% CI
Culture	3.54	0.40	(3.52, 3.56)
Support	3.47	0.45	(3.44, 3.49)
WorkResp	3.44	0.44	(3.41, 3.46)
Path	3.21	0.53	(3.18, 3.24)

Note. WorkResp = Navigating Work Responsibilities; Support = Developing a Support Network; Path = Progressing in Chosen Career Path; Culture = Understanding Work Culture. N = 1252 for all variable statistics.

For individual items in the instrument, standard deviations are larger and there is more variation in the individual item means. All but one of the items in the assessment have a mean score higher than 3.0, continuing the trend of relatively high career transition self-efficacy overall. The four items with the lowest mean scores are:

- Negotiate salary and benefits

- Identify next steps in your career

- Make a choice about a career path that is a good long-term fit for you

- Handle problems related to relationships at work

Three of these items represent the domain of Progressing in Chosen Career Path and the fourth item represents the domain of Understanding Workplace Culture. That the domain of Progressing in Chosen Career Path contains three of the four lowest scoring items supports the idea that this domain may be seen by participants as a longer-term objective and therefore, they may have a lower perceived self-efficacy in this area.

In contrast, of the four items with the highest mean score, three are from the domain of Understanding Workplace Culture and the fourth is from the domain of Navigating Work Responsibilities, which again, supports the possibility that workplace culture is something that is more easily achieved by graduates from all demographic categories. The four highest scoring items are below:

- Work as part of a team

- Learn the norms of a new workplace

- Learn new job related tasks

- Demonstrate socially acceptable workplace behavior

Appendix J contains the means and standard deviations of each item in the instrument.

Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory

The *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* consists of four items related to perception of adulthood status. The items included:

- Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?

- Are you financially independent?

- Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?

- Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?

The overall scores for the perception of adulthood status were lower than those of career transition self-efficacy. The item with the lowest overall mean was "Are you financially independent," and the item with the highest average score was "Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?" The standard deviations for each item in the instrument were high, relative to the top possible score of 4.0.

In particular, the question "Are you financially independent?" had a standard deviation of 1.14, with a mean score of 1.76, indicating responses along a wide range of the continuum. This may be due to participants experiencing their financial independence as a dichotomy of yes or no, rather than as a range, which could be identified with more participants responding in the very high or very low ranges of the scale. Table 5, below, contains the means and standard deviations for each of the items in the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory*.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Adulthood Independent Variables

VARIABLE	M	SD	95% CI
PersonalIdentity	2.17	.83	(2.12, 2.22)
LongTermWork	2.08	.96	(2.03, 2.13)
FeelAdult	2.0	.86	(1.95, 2.05)
FinanceIndep	1.76	1.14	(1.7, 1.82)

Note. *n* = 1225. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term? (McCallum Layton, 2014)

Quantitative Results

The guiding research question for this study was: What is the relationship between emerging adulthood and career self-efficacy of recent college graduates? In addition, there were four sub-questions addressed by this study, each of which relate to a specific predictor variable, as follows.

What is the effect of:

- Perceived adulthood status on the career transition self-efficacy?

- Age at graduation on the career transition self-efficacy?

- Gender on the career transition self-efficacy?

- Type of institution attended on the career transition self-efficacy?

This section provides the quantitative results regarding the effect of these variables on each of the four career transition self-efficacy domains: (a) Navigating Work Responsibilities, (b) Progressing in a Chosen Career Path, (c) Understanding Workplace Culture, and (d) Developing a Support Network. This section also provides results regarding the effect of these predictor variables on overall career transition self-efficacy.

Career Transition Self-Efficacy: Navigating Work Responsibilities

In understanding the predictors of the Navigating Work Responsibilities domain of career transition self-efficacy, hierarchical, block entry multiple regression analysis was the statistical test utilized. For Model 1, the block of predictors consisted of each of the four items on the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory.* For Model 2, age at graduation was added to the block. For Model 3, College Type was added to the block, and for Model 4, gender and current age were added to the block. For this analysis Model 4 was the best-fit model and is the model presented here. Model 4 has an R Square of .241, which means that 24.1% of the variance among responses is explained by the model.

In this model, there are five variables that were significant predictors of Navigating Workplace Responsibilities (as a domain of career transition self-efficacy) at a level of significance of .05, including College Type and all four items from the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory.* College type was a significant indicator such that respondents from public universities had significantly higher career transition self-efficacy around Navigating Work Responsibilities (which includes things such as managing stress at work, solving problems related to work responsibilities, being self-directed, and communicating with people of all levels in your organization) than did

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emerging adult graduates from private colleges and universities. Navigating work responsibilities may be one of the first vital skills one needs to learn when entering the workforce, so it is an important factor to consider in initial success in the college to career transition. All four of the items from the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* were significant predictors of this domain of career transition self-efficacy, such that scoring higher on this assessment predicts a higher self-efficacy around navigating work responsibilities, at a significant level.

Gender, current age, and age at time of graduation were not significant predictors of the career transition self-efficacy domain, Navigating Workplace Responsibilities, indicating that none of these factors were significant in predicting whether an emerging adult graduate would have higher or lower career transition self-efficacy than others. Table 6, below, provides details about the best-fit model.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Model With Navigating Work Responsibilities as Dependent Variable

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Intercept	2.53***	0.26	0
FeelAdult	0.06***	0.02	.12
FinanceIndep	0.04**	0.01	.10
PersonalIdentity	0.13***	0.02	.24
LongTermWork	0.07***	0.01	.16
GradAge	-0.01	0.01	-.01
CollegeType	0.12***	0.02	.13
CurrentAge	0.02	0.01	.06
Gender	0.02	0.02	.02

Note. $n = 1225$. *B* = unstandardized beta coefficients. *SE B* = standard error of beta. β = standardized beta coefficients. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?; GradAge = age at graduation; CollegeType = type of undergraduate institution.
$R^2 = .24$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Career Transition Self-Efficacy: Developing a Support Network

The multiple regression analysis for the career transition self-efficacy domain of

Developing a Support Network found four variables to be significant predictors for this

domain including gender, the feeling of being an adult, having a clear concept of personal identity, and knowing the kind of work that would be satisfying for the long-term. Three of these four variables are found in the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory*, with gender being the fourth factor. All of the perceived adulthood variables have a positive predictive relationship with career transition self-efficacy related to developing a support network, which means that higher levels of perceived adulthood status in these categories predicts a higher level of self-efficacy for this domain. For gender, being male predicts a higher level of self-efficacy around developing a support network. This finding is interesting and warrants additional research because it seems that gender may play a role in Developing a Support Network during the college to career transition. Age at graduation, college type, current age, and financial independence were not significant predictors of emerging adults' self-efficacy around developing a support network.

For this analysis, Model 4 was the best-fit model, accounting for 19% of the response variance, with an R Square of .19. Predictor variables and their levels of significance are reported in Table 7, below.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Model With Developing a Support Network as Dependent Variable

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Intercept	2.67***	0.27	0
FeelAdult	0.06**	0.02	.11
FinanceIndep	0.02	0.01	.05
PersonalIdentity	0.15***	0.02	.28
LongTermWork	0.06***	0.01	.12
GradAge	0.02	0.01	.03
CollegeType	0.04	0.03	.05
CurrentAge	-0.01	0.01	-.02
Gender	0.07**	0.03	-.07

Note. $n = 1225$. *B* = unstandardized beta coefficients. *SE B* = standard error of beta. β = standardized beta coefficients. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?; GradAge = age at graduation; CollegeType = type of undergraduate institution.
$R^2 = .19$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Career Transition Self-Efficacy: Progressing in a Chosen Career Path

For the career transition self-efficacy domain of Progressing on a Chosen Career

Path, the multiple regression analysis shows that only one variable was a significant at a

level of .05. The variable that was found to be a significant predictor is that of feeling

like an adult. In other words, this study found that having a more complete feeling of

being an adult is a predictor of higher self-efficacy around progressing in a chosen career

path. For this analysis, Model 4 is the best model, with an R Square value of .02.

Although the low R Square indicates that the model only accounts for 2% of the variation

in the responses, the predictive capacity of the variable is still significant. This indicates

that while there may be many other variables that are predictors of one's self-efficacy in

progressing in a chosen career path, that of feeling like an adult has a small, but

significant relationship with that self-efficacy level. The remaining variables were not

significant predictors of self-efficacy around Progressing on a Chosen Career Path. Table

8 below shows levels of significance for each variable.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Model With Progressing in a Chosen Career Path as Dependent Variable

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Intercept	2.50***	0.36	0
FeelAdult	-0.04**	0.01	-.08
FinanceIndep	0.01	0.01	.04
PersonalIdentity	-0.01	0.01	-.02
LongTermWork	-0.00	0.01	-.01
GradAge	0.02	0.02	.03
CollegeType	0.05	0.03	.05
CurrentAge	0.02	0.01	.06
Gender	0.01	0.03	.01

Note. $n = 1225$. *B* = unstandardized beta coefficients. *SE B*= standard error of beta. β = standardized beta coefficients. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?; GradAge = age at graduation; CollegeType = type of undergraduate institution.
$R^2 = .02$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Career Transition Self-Efficacy: Understanding Workplace Culture

The R Square value of the best-fit model for the career transition self-efficacy

domain of Understanding Workplace Culture was .02, again representing a small amount

of variance in responses, but at a significant level, meaning that while there are other variables that account for the variance, these variables play a small but significant role. Model 4 was the best-fit and is the model reported here. In this model, three variables were significant predictors of self-efficacy related to Understanding Workplace Culture, including current age, having a feeling of adulthood, and being financially independent. Two of these three variables are found on the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory*, continuing the trend of these variables being significant predictors of career transition self-efficacy. Table 9, below, provides details about the significance and coefficients for this model.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Model With Understanding Workplace Culture as Dependent Variable

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Intercept	3.15***	0.27	0
FeelAdult	-0.02**	0.01	-.07
FinanceIndep	0.02**	0.01	.07
PersonalIdentity	0.01	0.01	.01
LongTermWork	0.00	0.01	.00
GradAge	-0.00	0.01	-.01
CollegeType	0.04**	0.02	.05
CurrentAge	0.02	0.01	.09
Gender	-0.01	0.03	.01

Note. n = 1225. *B* = unstandardized beta coefficients. *SE B* = standard error of beta. β = standardized beta coefficients. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?; GradAge = age at graduation; CollegeType = type of undergraduate institution.
R^2 = .02.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Total Career Transition Self-Efficacy

In addition to running multiple regression analyses for each career transition self-efficacy domain individually, an analysis was completed to identify predictors for

participants' total career transition self-efficacy. Model 3 was the most parsimonious

model for that dependent variable with the highest R square value, and it is that model

which is reported here. The R Square for the model is .30, indicating that the model

accounts for 30% of the variance in the responses. The fourth model did not result in any

increase in the R Square value. Blocked-entry was used for entering variables for the

multiple regression analysis, and Model 4 added the variables of gender and current age.

Because Model 4 did not result in an increase in the R Square value and therefore, is not

being reported here, the variables that were added for that model (gender and current age)

are not represented in the statistical analysis.

In this analysis, all variables were significant predictors, with the exception of age

at graduation, which did not predict total career transition self-efficacy. Each of the

remaining variables were predictors of career transition self-efficacy at a level of

significance of .05. Higher levels of each of the perceived adulthood status items

predicted higher total career transition self-efficacy. Further, as with the domain of

Navigating Workplace Responsibilities, graduation from a public university was a

predictor of higher total career transition self-efficacy. Table 10 shows the significance

levels for each of the variables.

Table 10

Multiple Regression Model With Total Career Transition Self-Efficacy as Dependent Variable

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	β
Intercept	2.47***	0.23	0
FeelAdult	0.06***	0.01	.13
FinanceIndep	0.04***	0.01	.11
PersonalIdentity	0.13***	0.01	.26
LongTermWork	0.01***	0.01	.23
GradAge	0.01	0.01	.03
CollegeType	0.09***	0.02	.10

Note. n = 1225. B = unstandardized beta coefficients. SE B = standard error of beta. β = standardized beta coefficients. FeelAdult = Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?; FinanceIndep = Are you financially independent?; PersonalIdentity = Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?; LongTermWork = Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?; GradAge = age at graduation; CollegeType = type of undergraduate institution.
R^2 = .30.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Qualitative Results

For the qualitative component of this study, a narrative research approach was used to answer the guiding research question: What is the relationship between emerging adulthood and career self-efficacy of recent college graduates? This study sought to better understand the experience of transitioning from college to career as an emerging adult recent graduate, and as such, hearing the stories of individuals who are in that

process was important to garnering that understanding. Narrative research is appropriate

when the goal is to better understand an individual's experience (Gay et al., 2009) and it

allows the researcher to hear the unique stories of participants. Individual interviews

occurred via telephone with 10 participants representing diversity among the various

categories of demographic and assessment data that were gathered via the survey

instrument. Interview protocol can be viewed in Appendix H. The interviews were

recorded and transcribed.

Following each interview, the researcher reorganized and re-ordered the interview

transcripts and created a vignette of the graduate's transition experience, to date. Then,

in collaboration with each interview participant, a final narrative was crafted to depict

participants' experiences in the college to career transition. Eight of the 10 interviewees

participated in the final crafting of their stories. Two interview participants did not

respond to the researcher's request to review and provide feedback on their vignettes.

Vignettes for the two respondents who did not participate in the final approval of their

stories are not included in this chapter as complete stories. However, content from all 10

interviews is included in the broad analysis of all the interviews as a whole, the results of

which are presented as emergent themes in one section of this chapter.

The eight vignettes included here were crafted from a combination of direct

quotes from the participants and paraphrasing of participant comments. These vignettes

are the culmination of collaboration between the individual participant and the researcher.

Within each vignette quotation marks are used to indicate direct quotes. Phrases and

sentences that are paraphrased are included without quotation marks. In some instances

direct quotes that occurred at different points in the interview are located next to each

other in the vignette. In these instances quotation marks are used on each quote separately. What follows are the stories of eight interview participants, told in their own words, and an analysis of themes that emerged from 10 interviews.

Optimism in the Face of Challenge

A 25-year old who graduated from Institution A, a public university, at the age of 24, Janice has both a high-level of perceived adulthood status and a high level of career transition self-efficacy. Despite seeing herself as an adult and her high career transition self-efficacy, Janice has experienced a difficult transition in the year since she graduated. She is currently unemployed, taking a course at a community college, and optimistic about starting a graduate program in the near future. Here is her story:

I came from a country that is underdeveloped; I've seen what my people went through and I "want to help everybody. You can't help everybody, but I want to. I want to go back there to work and help the citizens. We don't have a lot of that." It is hard though… Nobody went to college in my family; my mom was a single mom. "I never had a mentor in college, but I had a mentor [in life]—my older sister is my mentor but she never went to school—she just started [school], so we are both on the same path now."

"When I was in high school I was doing a nursing program, so when I applied for college, my initial major was Biology, but I wasn't too excited about Biology so I chose Nuclear Medicine because I liked to deal with ions and stuff." Classes started and I moved into a dorm; I lived on campus my freshman year. At this point in my life I already felt like an adult.

"I was not excited about my major initially (laughs). There wasn't too much excitement until my senior year because we never knew where it was going, we were just taking all these classes like chemistry and math, all these pre-reqs and we did not even know what was going on." I learned that my school did not offer all the classes required by my major, and every student who selected this major needed to go to another school to take some of the classes. "It was inconvenient and more expensive for students." My graduation date was messed up because of the tuition problems caused by the additional expenses. "I had to wait like two semesters before I could go back to school—that is why I had a delayed graduation. It stressed me out." "It was just a lot of burden to go from one school to another school" just because my school didn't offer the classes. And the other school was "all about money. They don't care about how well you do, and they don't care about helping you find a job—they just care about money, money, money."

I finally made it to my senior year and had the opportunity to do an internship in a hospital for nine months. "I first thought of being a PA" (Physician Assistant) during this rotation. "I worked with PAs and I liked the job. I had a patient who… we were doing a lung scan on her… and she died on the table… and I felt guilty because I never helped her more. She was talking to me saying she was going to die and I was trying to tell her 'no, you are not going to die' and I wanted to listen to her and take her back to the ER but I couldn't do that because I wasn't a PA or a doctor. So, I had to just do her test—me and the technologist. I just felt so bad for the patient and so guilty." That is how I

changed my mind. Even if I found a job in my major I would not have done it for a long time, maybe just one or two years and I would go back to school to be a PA.

　　　After I graduated I looked for a job. I searched for 10 months and I "finally accepted that I am not going to find a job with my bachelor's degree, so I have to go back to school. I was stressed out. It wasn't a good time for me. I was stressed out. The field is competitive so hiring new graduates—there is just not any opportunities." And, my school didn't tell people how hard it was going to be. I don't think anybody should be in that major because there are no jobs in that major. You pay a lot of money to go to college and you want to get a job at the end and there are no jobs in that major. "It was a very stressful situation because I am not a person that gives up easily…. When it first happened to me, my family and friends were a support to me. They still support me. They say 'it is going to be okay' everyday. You are going to find a job – you just need to wait a little bit. But it seems like I waited too long. How much time can I wait? Right now I am just trying to settle for something little until I can go back to PA school and get my dream job."

　　　My school was no help. "Being a first generation student hurt my success. If I had a family member who had been to college, they could teach me to be more prepared. But nobody went to college so I had nobody to help me… I think every school should have a mentor program—like a graduate student—someone who can tell you something… I am going to be a mentor for my kids.

I applied to two PA programs. I am very excited for PA school because it is something I would like to do, and it is my passion and my desire to go back to school and focus and do what I have to do. I know with my PA degree I am going to find a job no matter what. But I am not just going for a job, I am also going because I like the medical field and stuff. So, it is something different than what I majored in, in college, so I am very happy."

"I think my transition was a lesson (laughs). It taught me a lot. It taught me to be strong and stuff. You know. I would rather have that experience—it was nice to have the experience—than to not have it. If you don't have the experience you are never going to grow… At the end of the day it helped me grow."

Purposeful Success

Ben is 29 now and graduated from Institution A, a public university, when he was 25. Having been out of school for four years, he finally feels settled in his career and is enjoying his job and his life. Ben has a high level of career transition self-efficacy and a high level of perceived adulthood. Ben's story is one of purposeful success:

"My situation is pretty convoluted. I would certainly say that mine is different than most people's [situations]. I was fortunate that I got a start right away in my field and stayed in my field. I know that is unusual, but I did very well in school on purpose." I graduated *magna cum laude* and I knew that in today's economy I needed to work hard.

"I have considered myself an adult since I was 16 years old. My mother was in the military for 29 years and she was very strict in many ways. She raised

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us to be adults… she wasn't raising kids, she was raising adults. Throughout high school and joining the army, I was always more mature than my peers. And of course, joining the army – if you aren't [mature] already – that is going to help."

"I was deployed to Iraq and there were situations over there that change a person pretty drastically." If there had been any doubt before then, from that point on I was absolutely an adult. So, by the time I went to college I was an Iraq war veteran. "I felt like I was surrounded by children. They seemed to be naïve and scared of the world." The army prepared me well and, "if I hadn't gone to basic training and Iraq before school I don't think I would have done nearly as well in college… not because I am not capable of it, but because I don't think I would have been as disciplined and mature about it."

Over the course of my college career, I attended two different public universities. At the first university I majored in business and "learned that there were too many fellow business and marketing majors, with too few positions that did not pay well, so I made the decision to pursue something more 'hireable' with a higher starting salary." That change in major meant a move to a different institution.

My new major required an internship, which I completed in the summer following the end of classes. That was a real benefit because I "learned 10 times as much in my first year after college as I did in my whole college career." I relocated across country, completed my internship, and met my future wife. The company invited me to stay on as an independent contractor for a few months, but when they wanted me to relocate across country again, I declined and set up

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interviews at other organizations. I was hired right away and stayed in the next role for 11 months before deciding to move onto two other relatively short-term positions before landing at the place where I spent two years.

I left each of these positions purposefully. When I moved into the position I stayed at for two years, it was "everything I wanted from a career and development stand-point. Unfortunately, it was an extraordinarily dysfunctional workplace." Leaving was one of the best things that happened to me and having those experiences "really hardened my skin and helped me to learn how to deal" with difficult situations and personalities. But, it was a challenging two years. "There is no amount of money that is worth what I put up with for two years." Following that experience, "I was unemployed for four months, and just accepted a position that is working out great. It is a very normal and professional work environment."

In thinking about preparation for the college to career transition, there are things that schools could do to help students make the transition more successfully. I remember a Business Communications course I took, which was "geared toward resume writing, presenting in public, and doing interviews. That was really valuable." Requiring those programs early on would be beneficial. Also, doing an "internship or on the job training as a first semester requirement would be very, very helpful. Six credit hours of 'on the job training' would really wake people up (early in their college career) and help them understand what they will be expected to do and how they need to pay attention and value the

opportunities they have." Lastly, "college students need some sort of mentor or someone to keep tabs on them (more than a standard college advisor)."

My transition has been a successful one. "A successful transition hinges a lot on maintaining work ethic. Being professional, being a go-getter and trying to seek out more work and get work accomplished that is tasked of you or available to you are extremely important. Just be ready to hit the ground running." I made a lot of moves and they were all voluntary but, "I took a lot of risks and I would not recommend to others that they take as many risks or be as aggressive. Having gone through that and survived it, I am very confident in my ability to move forward in my career successfully."

Realistic and Content

Maria is content with her life, despite the fact that her current career is not the one she set out to pursue, nor is it related to her college major. She graduated four years ago from Institution D, a public university, and is now 26. She still lives at home with her parents, which she feels is why she is only in the mid-range in her perceived adulthood. Her career transition self-efficacy is high, although she describes that it is moderated now by a sense of realism that was not present immediately after graduation, when she felt she could secure any position she wanted. During college, she credits her professors for preparing her for an adult world. In her words:

"I turned 22 on the day I graduated" and three months after graduation I accepted a position as a financial services specialist at a bank where I have been employed full-time since then. "I did not go to school for banking but I actually do enjoy the work that I do and the people I work with."

Going into college I was a broadcast communications major. "I knew I wanted to do something media related but I did not have a specific direction." In my sophomore year I was required to take a radio practicum class, during which you become part of the radio station and, "within a week of going there and meeting the people there I thought—wow—I really could really love radio!" "Honestly, I loved my four years of college. I loved what I learned and I loved what I did." From then on, it was my goal to go into radio, and shortly after graduation I accepted a part-time position at a radio station.

My college (public university) had a lot of positive impact on me—mostly due to some of the professors I had. There were two or three of my communications professors who were really fantastic. "They really did prepare college students to be an adult and move into the real world." Living at college does not "prepare you for adulthood at all… but the professors did." I don't really consider myself to be an adult yet; I still live at home. "I am trying to get out, but I want to get out of this area, and so while I still live here near my parents it doesn't make sense to pay rent somewhere. So that is a big factor in not feeling like an adult. I pay all of my own bills and have a car loan, but there is still something about living at home with your parents that hinders the process of becoming an adult."

So for three years I worked part-time in radio while working full-time at the bank. Having gotten a job in my chosen field gave me a lot of confidence. "When you first graduate from college you have this mindset that it is all open and it is going to be easy to just go get a job." And I did get something part-time,

but after three years I learned that "radio is something you really have to love to stick with, because there is no longer any money in radio. And, I know people tell you not to work just for money, but it is kind of hard to pay bills when you have student loans and all of that, so I could not foresee myself having a full-time radio job pretty much at any time. So I kind of moved on."

My confidence has dipped since I left the radio station—although it was a good choice to leave—because it was part-time and, where the station was, I was "paying more to work there than I was making. But in the year since I left there it has had me second-guessing myself. Am I meant to be in that sort of field? Should I stay where I am now? It is very easy to become complacent."

Life after college is "different. It is definitely different." Being away at school for four years you get towards the end of those four years and you start thinking about how excited you are to graduate and how you can't wait to get out of there. I was excited to graduate—really looking forward to it. And it came and I had about three months between graduation and starting to work. That was a good time because I got to relax and do a whole lot of nothing for a few months. And then, starting in September it was definitely different. Actually having a full-time job—that kind of helped the transition. But… It was nerve-wracking—no more naps at noon. No more sleeping until noon. You have to get up. You are on a schedule and… you get used to it after a few months.

To have a successful transition, college graduates need to "accept that it is not going to be like you think it is going to be while you are in college. You have all these big dreams—and I am not saying it can't happen—but right away you

just need to get out and start working hard and do what you can to survive that transition while you have to."

It is very clear to me that, even though I don't always feel like an adult or not completely an adult, the responsibilities I have taken on in career and personal life have helped me mature. "Relationship-wise, I never had a long relationship in college and for the last three years I have been with my boyfriend. That is a big change for me, personally, and I think a big part of that is transitioning into the real world and the career world. You kind of settle down and that has been the biggest difference for me."

My main goal in life now is to "just be happy enough to get up each day and go to my job, whatever that may be, and to survive from it." I am "still kind of looking to get back into communications at some point but for right now I am kind of settled." My advice to others who are graduating would be "if you have opportunities that present themselves when you graduate, even if you think you aren't ready for them, if it is something you want to do, just do them!"

Waiting on a Dream

One year after graduating from Institution C, a private university, at the age of 21, Angela is optimistic about her dream career becoming a reality, but it has not come to fruition yet. Her career transition self-efficacy is in the mid-range and her perceived adulthood status is low. She does not consider herself to be an adult. Angela was frustrated to learn how difficult it would be to move into her chosen profession with a bachelor's degree, and is hoping to start a graduate program in the fall. In the meantime, she has two part-time jobs (one in her field) and an unpaid internship. Although she has

experienced frustration in the last year, she feels like she is moving towards her dream

and is confident it will be realized – it will just take longer than she expected. Her story

is below:

> My goal of working in a museum "started when I was about 14. I grew up around
>
> museums, and was always fascinated by them, and I got the idea one day that I
>
> would love to work in one. So it was really a life-long fascination with their inner
>
> workings, how they get things, how they end up in exhibits, and how they keep
>
> people interested in what is inside the walls and on the walls. I just always found
>
> it so intriguing! I went into college as a history major thinking I'll be a history
>
> major, I'll work in a museum, it will be fabulous!"
>
> My parents talked me into the school I went to. I did not want to go
>
> there—it was a small school and sometimes "at the larger schools you have more
>
> opportunity just because people recognize the name." I loved my department, but
>
> I did not work very hard at first – I just did not want to be there… "My freshman
>
> year I kind of didn't care and it really screwed up my GPA. I thought 'I don't
>
> care as long as I pass' and I did not think it would matter. Looking back, I
>
> shouldn't have done that." "It is very frustrating because I graduated with an art
>
> degree that… there really aren't that many jobs out there. Right now, I have two
>
> part-time jobs and a part-time internship."
>
> In my last semester of school I studied abroad in England but after a few
>
> months I was "running out of money so I had to come home and I started
>
> searching for anything I could find and I got a job part-time at [a small
>
> museum]— and then a few months after that I took a job as a medical office

assistant, a job with health benefits… my mom helped me get a job there, which will help pay student loans until I find what I really want." "So I've been there since March, part-time, and at the beginning of the summer, in June, I picked up a part-time museum internship that is completely unpaid, but I think I have gotten the most experience with that, working in a museum, than anything I have done."

"I knew it was going to take a lot of work to get a job, especially with the field I was trying to get into. But I was the kid who graduated thinking I was not going to need a master's [degree]—I was going to be the person who gets their dream job without one." The most frustrating part was the reality check—I kept applying and was constantly getting the rejection emails—and I keep seeing bachelor's degree required and master's degree preferred. "That reality check made me realize that I need a master's if I am going to do anything with this career I have chosen to follow, so I am applying for a program that I can still get into for fall of 2014. If that doesn't pan out then we will shoot for next fall."

I wish my department would have talked about how many connections they have —helped us make connections. "Nobody came up and said 'this place is doing an internship and I am friends with the director, you guys should apply.'" I wish they were more honest about what it would take to break into the field. "The Chair and Assoc. Chair of our department were the only people who said 'you are not going to get jobs ….You are going to have to go to grad school, you are going to have to work hard, and you are going to have to know someone. You need to be prepared to work really hard for five years before you get where you

want to go.'" I was appreciative that the Chair told us that. I wish more people had.

To me a successful transition would be to graduate and have a job offer or to graduate and get accepted to graduate school, knowing that would take you in the direction you want… "I look at it more as graduating and knowing completely what you are going to do." But it seems like "the majority of us graduate and are not sure what we want to do and where we want to go, and are just taking a random job. Being pushed more towards being full-fledged adults is probably success."

I don't feel like an adult yet – "I still feel like a teenager. I think it is because I live at home and, since I work at the hospital, I interact with a lot of elderly people at the clinic and they always call me 'sweetie' and 'honey'; they treat me like a child. I don't feel like I have really grown up yet. I feel much more like an adult when I am independent and—living at home—it is not really happening."

"I am looking forward to graduate school because it will allow me to explore each department and decide which one I love the most. I want that one job where it is not just 'going to work' but it is something I really love to do and at that point I will look back and see that all the hard work was worth it." So I think I am heading towards a successful transition – I just haven't gotten there yet… "It will happen. I am not going to give up until it happens. I am very passionate about it. It may take 10 years, but I have accepted that and I will get there!"

A Dream Realized

While Angela works towards her dream, Nathan, a 26-year old who attended a private university (Institution C), has already realized his. Nathan completed his undergraduate work at the age of 22 and went straight into a graduate program, from which he graduated at 24. His career transition self-efficacy is high and he sees himself as fully adult. He is in the career he chose for himself and believes that attending a graduate program right after his undergraduate work helped him mature and prepare for the college to career transition. In the story below, Nathan tells about his realized dream:

From the time I was little, I remember wanting to do something medically related, helping people. When I was 13 or 14 I had a neck injury playing football, and since I went to physical therapy for the first time, I have always wanted to go into that field. Now, I am a Doctor of Physical Therapy, and I earn my living doing the work I have always wanted to do… my confidence is high that I will continue growing in and contributing to my chosen profession.

I enrolled at my college (a small private school), knowing the program I was going to pursue and knowing I could complete both undergrad and graduate studies at this school. My college did a great job. Both the professors and the "college as a whole did a great job of preparing us—everyone—for a very successful transition, as far as taking boards and searching for jobs." The college has a 100% job placement rate for physical therapy and 100% pass rate for the exams… but even the "general college staff – I worked with Career Services to put together a resume and to make sure I was ready for my interviews; I felt really well-prepared." When I picked my college, I went primarily because I knew I

could run cross-country there, I could do all 6 years of physical therapy there, and

I knew it was a smaller school. "I did not think I would do as well in a larger

school setting. The education and knowledge I gained from my school far

surpassed what I was expecting."

By graduation I had finished my clinicals and had "sent some resume

letters out the last month before graduation—and I got a job offer and accepted

that job offer about a week before graduation and started the job. I have been

working with the same company for the last two years full-time."

Since graduation and settling into my career, the biggest change I have

seen in myself, personally, has been an increased involvement in church. "When

I was in college—especially the last few years—I did not go to church a lot. I

was busy studying and having fun on the weekends. Since I have graduated from

physical therapy school, church and religion have become more important and

more of a focus." "And then also, just …I got married last summer and being

married (and not just being responsible for myself)" has been different, and a

growth opportunity because going to college, you are basically just responsible

for yourself.

A successful college to career transition means "getting established in

your career field and, it may not even be full-time because in some fields jobs are

difficult right now, but finding some kind of employment in the field you are

interested in." Also, "doing adulthood type things like paying bills or renting or

buying a house," are part of a successful transition. At this point, "I definitely

consider myself to be an adult. I would say probably at the end of undergrad and

when I started my first clinical, was when I would consider myself an adult." But definitely, now when there are all kinds of bills to pay and I am married, I definitely consider myself to be an adult.

Transitioning into my career at the age of 24, having a couple "extra years of school to finish the six year physical therapy program" may have had an impact on my transition, "since I got started out on my own, and in a job, a couple of years older than the typical college student who is just going to school for four years. I had a little more time to mature and enjoy myself, and to experience things before realizing—ok, now I need to get to being a doctor of physical therapy." Also, "being around other people who have the same goals and desires" as I do really helped me transition successfully.

One thing that was challenging for me in the transition was feeling comfortable "being assertive when starting my job and not being afraid to communicate with other people—to speak my mind if something occurred that I questioned… or to speak up if something happened that I did not think was right, to ask someone that question and not be afraid to ask those questions. That was one area where it definitely took a while to feel comfortable." College helped because we had to do a lot of presentations in the physical therapy program, at least once a week, and I think that prepared me very well. But, it still took some time being around different people (not just friends) who you are just starting to build relationships with, and to work with people where you may not agree with everything they do or say…but being assertive and asking questions is necessary.

I am lucky that I was passionate about a field where the job trajectory is good. I think it is important for college students to look at job trajectory when they are considering a career path. "I have a friend who got a degree in art history and he had a degree and no job then he went back to school for nursing. Then, my wife went to school for a teaching degree and is searching and searching for employment."

"You don't want to put yourself in a situation where you aren't going to enjoy your job… because you are probably going to be doing something related to what you go to school for 30, 40 [years], or maybe longer… So, you definitely want to do something you are going to enjoy and feel rewarded with, but you don't want to put yourself in a situation where you can't find a job or you make things really tough on yourself either." It is a balance.

Unfulfilled, a Dream Out of Reach

After five years of coursework at two different private institutions (he graduated from Institution B), Paul finished his bachelor's degree. That was four years ago, at the age of 23. Paul is unemployed and continues to look for work to pay bills and support himself. His career transition self-efficacy is low, as is his sense of himself as an adult. The transition has been challenging and he is unfulfilled. He feels he does not have the luxury of caring about fulfillment because he needs to pay bills. Yet, he looks back, wistfully, at his dream—the career for which he has a passion. He shares his story here:

I am a 27-year old college graduate. Four years ago I finished my undergraduate education after five years of coursework at two different institutions. The school from which I graduated was a small, private college referred to by those of us in it

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as "The Bubble" because of its insular environment. I would say my transition from college to career has been challenging and is incomplete. I have not settled into a career I find fulfilling and am not sure that will happen anytime soon. In fact, my goal right now is to simply find a job that will pay my bills and allow me to support myself. I don't feel like my transition has been successful, and I don't feel like I have fully grown into adulthood—yet.

As a child I had a knack for and desire to teach. I always admired teachers and was amazed that they could, "unlock the secrets of books for me, the secrets of stories for me, and make stuff come alive for me." After high school, I moved away from home to attend my first college (I switched after two years to another small, private college). Once at college, I really woke up to the idea that if I could be "just like my professors, that would be the coolest thing in the world."

At college I experienced freedom from my parents for the first time. College was, "an environ where everything is provided for you… you pay your money and you get dorms and food provided for you… so you don't have to provide anything for yourself. As long as you take care of your studies you can do what you want. It is not unlike being at home… just with slightly more freedom." It did not feel like adulthood, but rather, a "second childhood."

"Your parents always tell you, 'when you are the adult you can have ice cream for dinner, but for now, you are going to have broccoli' so that second childhood is where you have the freedom and autonomy to do what you want without someone over you saying no, you need to go to bed, or you need to have your veggies. That is the adulthood I had a taste of during college." I got married

during my senior year in college. I did not feel like a full adult and I thought marriage may bring me closer to adulthood, and, it seemed like a logical next step in my relationship with my girlfriend. It was my first real long-term relationship.

After college, I thought I would graduate and go on to teach, or go to graduate school. However, professors were not open in talking about what was required to move into the profession, and so I did not know what to expect; I was unprepared for next steps. At graduation I felt "worn out" and mentally drained. After years of being provided for and having deadlines and goals to accomplish, I was thrust into a situation where "I am a young adult trying to put together a career and there is nobody telling me what direction to go in." It was difficult.

During the first few years after graduation, I looked for work and felt stressed that so much responsibility was now on my shoulders. There was no class to tell me how to move forward. I struggled to figure out, "What do I do and how do I grow up and be an adult?" By the time I turned 25 I started to feel more like an adult, but I still felt very young. I would look at my older siblings, and could see that they were adults and I realized I was "just not there yet."

I am 27 now and I got divorced three months ago. I am really trying to transition to being a career person now. "I'd love somehow, in this crazy world of trying to find a job and trying to support myself, to put myself in a position where I am teaching more than I am doing anything else" – teaching is part of my identity. But right now I am "just trying to get a job that pays the bills" and I can't begin making plans for the advanced degrees I need to move into a teaching position.

For me, a successful transition is one where a student graduates and goes directly into a career of their choosing or to graduate school, and it is one where the person is able to handle the responsibilities of life and provide for themselves. I don't see my transition as a successful one, so far.

Looking back, there are things that could have helped me be more prepared. Having professors talk about the reality of life after college, the challenges of a job search, and the requirements of moving into specific career options would have been beneficial. And, I could have, "been more deliberate" about understanding the responsibilities I would face; I could have made different choices. If there had been a class, if there had been a "preparatory journey for life as well as professional career," that could have made a difference.

I am still waiting for the moment I feel like an adult…I can imagine it getting here once I get settled in my career. For now I am just looking for work that will pay the bills and provide financial security to keep me going for a couple of months. "I don't really have the ability to plan long-term right now because I still have my undergrad loans and all these responsibilities I have in front of me… I don't really have the freedom to choose beyond this moment."

Frustrated Skeptic

Kathy questions the value of her college education and the value of college, in general. She graduated four years ago at the age of 22, from Institution A, a public university, and is working in a career unrelated to her degree although, at this point, she concedes it is her chosen career. Having been unable to secure a position in her field, Kathy accepted her current job and also works on weekends in a low-paying job that is in

the field about which she is passionate. She is in the middle range for both perception of

adulthood status and career transition self-efficacy. Her frustration is palatable in her

tone, and her story is wrought with angst:

"I stopped counting after 100 jobs I applied for…." So much stress is put on

college, the college experience, and doing all this stuff. Like I was told – if you

go to college, you will get a good job – and I really don't feel like that is true

anymore. It is getting more expensive and there are less jobs available and it is

still be thrust down kids' throats—it's like "college, college, college." "Honestly,

I think before kids start college they need to be made more aware of what will

happen once they graduate. Is my liberal arts degree really going to pay off in the

long run? Or should I go be an electrician and do what would make more sense?"

My boyfriend got a degree in public administration and could not get a job; now

he is a truck driver. The CDL was free through his employer. So he now also has

a useless degree and is paying back $30,000 in loans and is working in a job that

doesn't require any type of degree. He likes his job… why have a college degree?

I started college right after high school and I didn't really think about

selecting my major. I looked at the classes in high school to see what I had done

the best in, which was History, so I majored in that…You know, when you go

into college at 18 you don't really know what you want to do, so I just picked

something. If I started college later it would have impacted my transition because

"I would have been more focused. I would have had a better idea of what I could

do after college. If I had started later I could have said, 'what is most practical…

what could I do without a butt-load of debt? Well, right now history is not in high

demand so maybe I should do business.'" But, "I loved my classes, I loved the experience, I loved what I learned and I will always love world history, love learning about it and reading about it. But if I had picked another major I would have gone with something more practical."

When I graduated from my undergraduate program I had already been accepted into a graduate program in Applied History. I already knew I was going to grad school because I had applied the previous semester. After I graduated, I applied for—I don't know how many jobs—and I finally found something… I started waitressing. "I was there for four months before I had enough. You can really only stand that for so long before you hate your life. So, I moved back home because I could not afford my apartment anymore. So I moved back home and I started waitressing again" at a different restaurant; I became their assistant manager. I worked there for a year and a half and then I got a part-time job working at a museum, which was more along the lines of what I wanted to do. "So I got hired as a part-time tour guide there for eight dollars an hour and I have been working there for just over a year now."

In college and my graduate program, I did not "take advantage of a lot of the things I should have… like, in terms of networking… I could have talked to people, gotten to know people, put my name out there more. I never really did any of that. If I had done more of those things…" "Another thing I think hindered me was my interviewing skills. When I left college and started interviewing for jobs I had a few interviews that just didn't pan out. I was not prepared enough for that. I know they have career centers at my schools that I

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never went to… and I should have done that straight from the get go and I never did because that was not something I was thinking of at the time…"

In February I got my new job (I still work at the museum on weekends). I am a caseworker for children and youth services. I got this job because my sister works in an office in the same building and told me they were hiring. "I don't really enjoy it… 60% of the time I enjoy my work. It is not the greatest job. Physically it is very easy but mentally it is very straining because you see lots of horrible things. I had no training in anything like that before I took the training courses they offered, so it was a big shock to me."

"It is still a goal at some point to move into museum or archival work… that will always be a goal. I am hoping that someday, the museum I am working at now will have a full-time position for me and if they offered me one, I would take it in a heartbeat. I have looked at other places, but I can't afford to move to places where I might have a better chance because I still live at home with my parents because I cannot afford student loans and rent."

"I would say I am still in transition. I have made some progress toward a legitimate, adult life. Like, I just got my first job that was full-time and not a restaurant job this year—with benefits and health insurance. So that part I am doing well. But the fact that I am still living home with my parents… that whole process has not come full circle yet. I would still consider that being in transition. I did not know what to expect. Everyone has a hope that they will get a great job and move out and be self-sufficient. That is how I would envision being a successful transition—being able to rely on myself—mainly financially—which

right now I haven't been able to do." I don't feel quite like an adult yet. "I actually joke about it with my parents. I say, 'I am getting closer!'"

"I would say casework is probably my chosen profession right now. I have only been doing it for six months, so this could turn out to be something. It definitely was a choice… I thought 'I will see where this can lead'… It is definitely something I can do… if it doesn't burn me out that fast. That is what I am told from people working in the field is that you can get burned out really fast… just from the nature of the work…the emotional and mental part of it."

"I have a lot of teenagers on my case load now…" and I think they should "really, really think about" whether college is right for them and look at the big picture of whether the degree they pursue is really going to give them the life they want. "What if that doesn't work out for them? What if they end up in the same boat I am in? Here is $60,000 you will have to pay back 'good luck!'… I don't feel comfortable telling them to go to college."

Excited Optimism

Elliot can imagine a time when he feels fully adult and, although his career transition self-efficacy assessment indicates he is in the mid-range for career transition self-efficacy, he is exuberantly confident and excited about the future that awaits him. Elliot graduated last year at the age of 22 from a public university (Institution A) and, similar to other participants, realizes that his dream job is dependent on pursuing a graduate degree, which he was scheduled to begin the week following the interview for this study. He shares his story below:

When I was in my senior year of college "I took some bad advice from a professor and took a year off school after graduation; the professor told me that my GRE scores weren't high enough to get into most grad schools so I did not apply." Instead, "when I graduated I was going to work as a staff person for a campus ministry – Campus Crusade for Christ." As a missionary I would need to raise my own support, but it did not go well and I was not able to raise the money I needed. "I felt called by Christ to do the campus ministry. The entire time I was raising support for Him, it was a nightmare but I was trying to ask 'is this what you still want?' Eventually it was to the point where, I truly believed He wanted me to do it because He wanted to see if I truly believed in Him and would do what He told me to do. My relationship with Christ had a tremendous impact on my transition after college. And, my girlfriend, now fiancée, soon to be wife – she really helped me by saying 'you are smart, you can do it.' She is a huge driving force in my life because she wants me to succeed and to be happy. Having a huge support system in my fiancé the support of that and knowing that ultimately He is in control—whatever He wants to have happen will happen."

Instead of serving in the campus ministry the rest of that year, I moved to Florida and "got accepted into one of the best counseling programs in the country – I start next week… life has a funny way of working out sometimes."

When I began my college experience, I wanted to be a history teacher, but I declared as a Psychology major when I entered college because I thought I could make more money that way. "Looking back it was a knee-jerk reaction to make more money in life but not something I thought out very clearly." But, "one thing

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that always got to me was that at 3:00 a.m. my phone was always ringing or people were texting me and telling me what was going wrong" in their lives. "I would talk to them because I did not have anything better to do at 3:00 a.m. except sleep, so I would get up and talk to them and get them to realize that life is not that bad, that life will get better." And "the enjoyment that came from helping them pull themselves out of a hole that they had dug… it was a tremendous feeling." In my senior year of college "I had an awesome internship at a drug and alcohol treatment center." My supervisor loved me and it gave me "actual experience in the field other than just reading books and writing papers about stuff… I became very serious about addiction counseling, addiction therapy, and addiction treatment…I want to help people get themselves out of that."

It worked out that I ended up having a passion for the field I selected when I entered college, but it doesn't work that way for many people. "I think that it is kind of ridiculous that we expect 18 year-old kids to pick a career path that they are going to follow for 50 years." I think it should be that, "if you don't want to go to school right away you don't have to—I mean it is always your choice—but there is a big pressure to go to school then go to college and then find a job from there… You just have to find yourself first and find out what you really want to do instead of spending a lot of money, a lot of time, a lot of stress and then finding out two years in—'Man I really don't want to be a Biology major, I should have been a Theatre major.'"

"I think there would be a huge correlation between someone's overall happiness at an institution where they don't have to declare until they are a

junior… and their success level." If colleges could "make kids attend career preparedness seminars… make them mandatory. Or do something to make it easier for kids to talk about things more advanced than just drinking and partying," that would help students be more prepared after graduation. It would be good to have "seniors talk to freshmen and say 'this is what we need to do… you'll take these classes… and this class will be terrible….you'll be up all night writing papers… but if you are passionate about this work, you will get through it and it will be worth it.' I wish conversations like that would happen."

"By age, technically I am now an adult, but by my personality and my attitude," I don't feel like an adult all the time. "There are certain times I think I have a mature attitude and thoughts about things but there are other times when I still feel like a kid, act like a kid, think like a kid. For example, on just a regular week night, if I have off or something, it is usually just spent playing video games or relaxing or go bowling… I don't work on things I should… I don't know what adults usually do on the weekends … I just like to relax and play video games. But, as far as being an adult, I am always at work on time… I know when to dress professionally and how to act professionally and how to speak to people based on their influence in the world. I recognize that difference in life and try to act upon it… I am an adult in how I talk to people and how I carry myself in professional settings and environments." I am still growing. "I am least confident with my ability to save money; financially I am not the best at that." I am most confident about my people skills and "my ability to adapt in any situation and figure out what I need to do pretty quickly."

When I finish my degree and get a real job and have kids and become a father I will be completely adult. I am very confident and optimistic about my future success in my profession.

Emergent Themes

As a final step in the qualitative analysis, the vignettes developed from interviews with 10 participants were analyzed as a whole, to identify emerging themes. From this analysis, six key themes emerged:

- Pursuing a dream career

- Internships as valuable and enjoyable learning experiences

- Leaving college and pursuing life after college is challenging

- Significant impact of individual relationships at the college

- Age as an important factor in success

- Optimism and hope

What follows is a presentation of the data representing these themes.

Pursuing a dream career. The theme of pursuing a dream career was present in half of the interviews. Participants indicated that their choice of career was influenced by a long standing interest, passion, or dream of moving into the career path they chose to pursue when they declared their major in college. It is not clear whether following a career dream has an impact on career transition self-efficacy related to navigating work responsibilities or progressing in a chosen career path, but it seems plausible that those may be related. Data supporting this theme include:

- "…it was a lifelong fascination… I just always found it intriguing…" "I still have a goal at some point to move into museum or archival work… that will always be a goal."

- From the time I was little I remember wanting to do something medically related… I earn my living doing the work I have always wanted to do.

- As a child I had a knack for and desire to teach. [Teachers could] "unlock the secrets of books for me, the secrets of stories for me, and make stuff come alive for me." Being a professor "would be the coolest thing in the world."

Internships as valuable and enjoyable learning experiences. For four of the 10 interview participants, internships had a significant impact on their interest in pursuing their career of choice. For some, the internship helped identify a path and for others, the internship solidified an already existing interest or passion. Participants shared that internships contributed to their learning about their career in a more robust way than other college learning. Internships have the potential of contributing to career transition self-efficacy in several ways. Not only do they provide real experience in a career, but also provide an opportunity for students and graduates to develop their self-efficacy around several career transition self-efficacy domains including navigating work responsibilities, understanding workplace culture, and progressing in a chosen career path. Samples of data supporting this theme are below:

- "I finally made it to my senior year and had the opportunity to do an internship in a hospital." "I first thought of being a PA during this rotation."

- [My internship] was a real benefit because I learned 10 times as much [there] as I did in my whole college career.

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- Requiring an "internship or on the job training as a first semester requirement would be very, very helpful."

- I just picked up an unpaid internship and… I think I have gotten the most experience with that… than anything I have done.

- "I had an awesome internship…." The internship helped me get into my grad school of choice.

Leaving college and pursuing life after college is challenging. Despite the fact that five participants had a dream career in mind and four participants experienced internships that were highly valuable to their college experience, the reality for these participants was that the transition from college to career was challenging. This challenge is expressed both by participants who are satisfied with their transitions and those who are not satisfied with their transitions. Four participants shared information around this theme:

- "Life after college is different… it was nerve-wracking."

- Accept that it is not going to be like you think it is going to be… you have all these big dreams—I am not saying it won't happen—but right away you just need to get out and start working and do what you can to survive.

- …after graduation it was really hard. Not so much because of the work that I was doing and how my job went, but it was a hard transition….it was hard to lose that environment.

- "I felt a change—almost like a light switch—this is what I have to do now, so I just did it."

- At graduation I felt "worn out" and mentally drained. After years of being provided for and having deadlines and goals to accomplish, I was thrust into a situation where "I am a young adult trying to put together a career and there is nobody telling me what direction to go in… it was difficult."

- There was no class to tell me how to move forward; "What do I do and how do I grow up and be an adult?"

Significant impact of individual relationships at the college. The individual relationships with people on the college campus were important factors in these participants' transitions. In speaking about the impact of their choice of college, six of the 10 participants talked about individual relationships rather than the college overall. Regardless of whether they had a positive or negative impact, the relationships were significant for these participants. Positive relationships during the college environment may foster self-efficacy around developing a support network… it would be interesting to identify how negative relationship experiences may impact self-efficacy in this domain as well. Individual comments are included below:

- My college had a lot of positive impact on me—mostly due to some of the professors I had.

- My college did a great job; I felt really well-prepared. I worked with someone in Career Services that was really helpful.

- I was really lucky with the adviser I got and I owe her a lot for coaching me to do different things… she was fantastic. I can't even put into words how great she was.

- My college was "fantastic in lots of ways." And, I think my professors offered a lot… there are incredible human beings there, professors that just inspired me…

- Professors were not open to talking about what was required to move into the profession, and I did not know what to expect; "I was unprepared for next steps."

- "I took some bad advice from a professor…."

Age as an important factor in success. One variable this study sought to explore as a possible predictor for career transition self-efficacy was age at graduation from college. In interviews, age was mentioned by three participants as having a significant potential impact on success. In one instance, age at graduation from college was mentioned. In the other instances, age at college entry or age at major declaration were mentioned:

- Transitioning into my career at 24, having a "couple extra years of school" may have impacted my transition… "I had a little more time to mature…."

- "I think it is kind of ridiculous that we expect 18 year old kids to pick a career path that they are going to follow for 50 years."

- I think there would be a huge correlation between someone's overall happiness at an institution where "they don't have to declare [a major] until they are a junior… and their success level."

- When you go into college at 18 years old, you don't really know what you want to do. If I had started college later, "I would have been more focused. I would have had a better idea of what I could do after college."

Optimism and hope. One of the most compelling and overarching themes emerging from this study was the sustaining sense of optimism and hope held by participants who were satisfied with their transition, and by those who were not. Five of the 10 participants expressed optimism and hope in their future careers and for their lives.

- My transition was a lesson (laughs). It taught me a lot. I would rather have the experience… than to not have it. At the end of the day it helped me grow.

- I think I am heading towards a successful transition—I just haven't gotten there yet—It will happen.

- I am going to continue to grow, even after my MBA. I don't want to be at a standstill.

- I "have a couple of offers and so I am going somewhere…so I feel I am ready for that… I am really well prepared for it."

- I am happy about my transition and I am really confident in my ability to move forward in my career in the coming years. It is good and I am ready.

- [Having those experiences] "really hardened my skin and helped me to learn how to deal" with [adversity].

Chapter Summary

This mixed-method study sought to better understand the college to career transition experience of emerging adult college graduates and, specifically, to identify whether variables including age at graduation from college, current age, gender, type of college attended, or status of perceived adulthood were significant predictors of career transition self-efficacy. Data have been presented related to the statistical analyses of each of these variables and their significance to total career transition self-efficacy and

each of four career transition self-efficacy domains. Qualitative data were presented to

address the overarching experience of emerging adults who have transitioned from

college to career over the last four years. The narratives of individual participants allow

for a deeper understanding of experience. In addition to the narrative stories of

participants, vignettes were analyzed as a whole to identify the emergent themes, which

were also presented here.

Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of these data and their implications for

colleges and universities. Recommendations for future study will also be addressed.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter serves to pull together the content of previous chapters, reviewing the questions, methodology, data collection, and analyses. As a primary function, this chapter also summarizes and interprets the findings of this study and provides recommendations for educators, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

This study sought to understand the experience of emerging adult college graduates who are transitioning from college to the world of work. For college graduates this transition can be challenging (Arnett, 2000; Crebert et al., 2004; European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007). Graduation from college is often expected to serve as a catalyst for career development and the attainment of employment. It is a time when graduates anticipate significant, positive outcomes related to the world of work. But the search for employment, uncertainty about long-term career objectives, and adjusting to the cultural differences and responsibilities of work make the transition more difficult. In a 2010 study, Murphy et al., found that the experience of transitioning to a career after graduation is "multifaceted and often very challenging psychologically and vocationally" (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 175).

In addition, the fact that this transition usually occurs during emerging adulthood, a life stage that spans the ages of 18-29, magnifies the challenges of an already difficult time. Emerging adulthood serves to magnify the challenge because it is a time of life characterized by exploration,

identity-seeking, few responsibilities, and increased freedom (Arnett, 2000). The characteristics of this stage of life mean that emerging adults often delay making decisions about major life choices (e.g. moving into a long-term career and choosing a life partner). This delay, it seems likely, may negatively impact the transition from college to career.

In this important and unique time of life, colleges have significant responsibility for preparing their graduates to successfully navigate the transition (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), and successful navigation is often evidenced by attainment of employment in a field of the graduate's choice. In fact, "one of the most important outcomes for universities is the quality of their graduates' integration into the job market" (Gallifa, 2009, p. 229). One approach colleges and universities may take to assist graduates during this transition is to focus on building student and graduate career transition self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is a measurable characteristic that may have a positive impact on the successful college to work transition for emerging adults. Studies show that higher levels of self-efficacy are related to shorter periods of unemployment in adults (Eden & Aviran, 1993; Kanfer et al., 2001), positive job well-being in a college student population (Lubbers et al., 2005), and higher levels of job search behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001). There are few studies that address self-efficacy related to the post-college transition of emerging adults, and the present study serves to expand the literature in this area.

Self-efficacy is a measure that serves as a predictor of post-graduate success in these ways because positive self-efficacy (in specific activities and domains) increases a

person's willingness to take action, improves performance, and leads to greater persistence in the face of challenges or failures (Bandura, 1982). For these reasons, self-efficacy during the college to career transition is an important measure. Colleges and universities need to understand the relationships among 1) perceived adulthood status, 2) type of college or university attended, 3) age at graduation, 4) current age, and 5) gender as they relate to career transition self-efficacy, and also to understand the experience of transitioning from college to career as emerging adults. This understanding will help colleges and universities better prepare graduates for success.

Review of Methodology

As described in Chapter 3, this mixed-method study sought to better understand the experience of emerging adult college graduates who began their college to work transition within the four years prior to the study. In addition to seeking a deeper understanding of the experience, this study sought to identify predictors of career transition self-efficacy. Independent variables for this study included: (a) age at graduation from college, (b) type of institution attended (public or private), (c) current age, (d) gender, and (e) perception of adulthood status. The guiding question for this research was: What is the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy of recent college graduates? In addition, there were four sub-questions addressed by this study:

- What is the effect of perceived adulthood status on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?
- What is the effect of age at graduation on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of gender on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

- What is the effect of type of institution attended on the career transition self-efficacy of emerging adult recent college graduates?

A mixed-method design was utilized to allow for a more thorough understanding of the experience of transitioning from college to career as an emerging adult (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For the quantitative component, hierarchical block-entry multiple regression analysis was used to identify predictors of career transition self-efficacy. For the qualitative component of this study, narrative research was used, allowing participants to tell their stories and then to participate in the finalization of a narrative of their experience (Gay et al., 2009).

Individual emails were sent through Qualtrics to alumni from three participating institutions of higher education who had graduated within the four years prior to the start of the study. A fourth participating institution sent the survey to alumni via a link in an electronic newsletter that was sent to all alumni. The survey included a question asking participants to indicate whether they were willing to be interviewed for the study. Participants for the qualitative component of the study were selected purposefully from the group who indicated they were willing to be interviewed. A total of 1,252 participants completed the survey instrument and 570 indicated they were willing to be interviewed for the study. A total of 10 interviews were completed, recorded, and transcribed. Data analysis occurred separately for the qualitative and quantitative research components, with joint analysis taking place as a final step in the process.

Summary of the Findings

The overall career transition self-efficacy of participants in this study was relatively high, a finding that was surprising. This finding is surprising because, as Arnett (2000), Wood and Kaczynski (2007), and others agree, the transition from college to career is challenging. Further, emerging adulthood is a time of life with characteristics that may be incongruent with developing a high level of self-efficacy (e.g. delayed decision-making and lack of clarity around identity). It seems likely, therefore, that emerging adult college graduates would have a relatively low career transition self-efficacy.

The means for each of the four career transition self-efficacy domains were higher than 3.0 on a Likert scale where 0 represents *no confidence* (score of 1) and 3 represents *complete confidence* (score of 4). Further, standard deviations were small (the highest was 0.53), indicating that the responses were clustered closely around the mean. This relatively high level of career transition self-efficacy was echoed in some of the participant interviews. In fact, some of the interview participants described high levels of career transition self-efficacy despite a simultaneous feeling that their transition from college to career had not been a successful one. For example, Janice's transition has been difficult and she was unable to secure a job in her field after 10 months of searching. As a result, she plans to go back to school for her master's degree. Despite this level of challenge and lack of success, she is excited and optimistic that once she gets her graduate degree, she will readily obtain a job in her field.

It would seem that someone who has had a very challenging time in their transition to date, would struggle with low career transition self-efficacy. It seems

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unlikely that unsuccessful transition activities would result in a higher level of confidence

at performing those activities successfully. Yet, data suggest that these participants do

still have a strong self-efficacy around those activities.

Although the career transition self-efficacy of participants was relatively high, the

perception of their adulthood status was not high. The means for the four assessment

items related to perception of adulthood status were all under 2.5, the mid-point for the

assessment scale, with the highest mean being 2.17 and the lowest mean being 1.76. Like

career transition self-efficacy, perceived adulthood status was measured on a 4-point

Likert scale. For this assessment, 0 represented *no* (score of 1) and 3 represented

definitely (score of 4). In interviews, only Janice, Ben, and Nathan expressed a feeling

that they were *fully adult*, while the other seven participants expressing a feeling of being

not quite adult or moving towards adulthood.

Quantitative Findings

Multiple regression analysis was used to identify predictors of the four domains of

career transition self-efficacy and a final analysis looked at predictors of total career

transition self-efficacy. The predictor variables represented in the multiple regression

models included the four perceived adulthood items, graduation age, current age, type of

institution attended (public or private), and gender.

Findings of non-significance. There were two variables that were found to be

significant predictors only in a very limited way. Gender, for the most part, was not a

predictor of total career transition self-efficacy or the individual domains, with the

exception of the domain of developing a support network. Similarly, current age was not,

overall, a significant predictor in this study, and was only found to be a significant

predictor for understanding workplace culture. Lastly, age at graduation was not a predictor in any of the analyses for career transition self-efficacy.

The finding that age at the time of graduation is not a predictor of career transition self-efficacy is surprising because it seems possible that someone who graduated at a later age may have more life experience from which career transition self-efficacy could have developed, and may have a clearer sense of adulthood and self-identity, which could also positively impact career transition self-efficacy. For example, Arnett's research (2000) indicates that vocational identity grows throughout emerging adulthood, as young people live through various experiences. Further, Bandura (1982) posits that having experience performing actions is one of the primary sources of self-efficacy. Progressing in age and the increased life experiences that accompany aging could provide sources of career transition self-efficacy.

This finding may be indicative of the reality that age does not necessarily indicate maturity or development and therefore, the study shows that characteristics of maturity, such as perception of self as an adult, are better predictors of career transition self-efficacy than age itself. The work of Fouad and Bynner (2008) supports the idea that the college to work transition requires more than just life experience that comes with age. They argue that preparation for the transition requires a level of emotional, cognitive, and social development that enables a young adult to pull together all the resources they need to be successful (Fouad & Bynner, 2008, p. 244). Arnett's work supports this idea. Arnett (2000) suggests that emerging adults seek out diverse life experiences that ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of their own values and interests. That deeper

understanding of values and interests results in the actualization of vocational identity Arnett, 2004); the understanding occurs as a result of experiences, not age.

Findings of significance. The feeling of being an adult (one of the perceived adulthood variables) predicted each of the outcome variables for this study, at a significant level. The other three perceived adulthood variables were each significant predictors of multiple outcome variables. These findings demonstrate that perceived adulthood status, as a whole and in part, is connected to career transition self-efficacy in a potentially powerful way. The relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy, as seen in the data, is one such that perceived adulthood status is a significant predictor of career transition self-efficacy.

Arnett's work (2000) is suggestive of this finding, as he argues that towards the end of emerging adulthood, young people have a more defined sense of vocational identity. Expanding on this idea, in their publication, "Uncertainty in early occupational aspirations: Role exploration or aimlessness?" Staff et al. (2010) argue that a clearer sense of vocational identity helps young people make career decisions and also eases the college to work transition. Further, Murphy et al. (2010) found that general self-efficacy of participants increased as emerging adults explored various careers. The findings of this study expand on these ideas and extend the existing literature about self-efficacy, the college to career transition, and emerging adulthood. The current gap in this area of literature is acknowledged by Murphy et al. (2010), who argues that research on career development during emerging adulthood is limited. The gap is also recognized by Konstam and Lehman (2010), who agree that there is a lack of research on the self-efficacy of emerging adults.

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Other variables were also found to be significant predictors of career transition self-efficacy. First, for the domain of Developing a Support Network, gender was a significant predictor such that being male predicted a higher level of career transition self-efficacy in developing a support network. If being a male is a predictor of one's self-efficacy around developing a support network, it may be anticipated that maleness would be a predictor of other career transition self-efficacy domains, but the data do not show that to be the case. It is interesting that gender seems to play some role in this domain of career transition self-efficacy, and future research could explore this finding more fully.

Second, this study found that attending a public university predicts higher scores on total career transition self-efficacy and predicts higher scores on self-efficacy related to navigating work responsibilities. This finding is interesting because, in some ways, it may seem that private colleges and universities would have the ability to more readily foster career transition self-efficacy in their students. For example, White (2003) posits that the smaller size of private colleges and the smaller faculty to student ratios promote more interaction and a more intimate learning experience. It seems plausible that a setting as described by White (2003) may foster the development of career transition self-efficacy more robustly than the larger and less intimate settings of a public college or university. It seems plausible because the smaller, intimate setting may provide students with more exposure to experiences that build self-efficacy such as receiving verbal reassurances (Lin & Flores, 2011) and seeing behaviors modeled effectively (Bandura, 1982).

On the other hand, even if it were established that the more intimate environment of a private college (White, 2003) may foster self-efficacy, the type of self-efficacy

fostered would depend on the focus of the interactions between students and faculty or administrators. For example, if students receive verbal reassurance on tasks related to research and watch professors modeling productive research behavior, the self-efficacy developed would be in the domain of research – not career transitions. So, even if it were clear that a private college or university environment may foster self-efficacy, that knowledge does not suggest the type of self-efficacy that would be developed.

Another important consideration related to this finding is that there may be other factors at play in the predictive quality of attending a public university and career transition self-efficacy. For example, perhaps the population who apply to and attend public universities already have a higher level of career transition self-efficacy. Therefore, while the finding that public university attendance predicts higher levels of career transition self-efficacy is interesting, it is important to note that there are many other variables to consider in understanding this finding.

Nonetheless, the finding is a provocative one for higher education now, given the increased demand for colleges and universities to demonstrate the post-graduate success of their graduates. The growing demand for colleges to prepare students and graduates for success after college is evidenced, in part, by the Department of Education's (2013) College Scorecard consumer website, on which employment of graduates is one of the five assessment categories used to score colleges and universities. Society is expecting more from colleges and universities in terms of linking education to post-graduate success and this expectation is impacting private and public colleges and universities alike.

If both public and private colleges are being measured, to some extent, on how well graduates move into the workforce (Gallifa, 2009) and if it is imperative that colleges and universities prepare students for employment (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008), then public and private colleges are, in some ways, being *measured* on a similar criterion. Yet, a private college experience is more costly (White, 2003). In this situation, private colleges may be at a disadvantage for demonstrating their value because they are more costly, yet are being judged by the same measures as public colleges and universities. Historically, the value private colleges have provided students has been articulated, in part, as the experience of a more intimate learning environment and closer connections with faculty and administrators (White, 2003). However, if that experience does not contribute to post-graduate employment attainment, it may be harder, in this climate where society is calling for colleges to prepare students for employment, for private colleges to demonstrate their value. Given this changing climate in higher education, it will be interesting to see how colleges and universities respond.

Qualitative Findings

In reviewing the qualitative component of this study for findings that aid the understanding of the experience of emerging adult college graduates transitioning from college to career and to better understand the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy, the following themes emerged:

- Pursuing a dream career
- Internships as valuable and enjoyable learning experiences
- Leaving college and pursuing life after college is challenging
- Impact of individual relationships with faculty and professional staff

- Age as an important factor in success

- Optimism and hope

Pursuing a dream career. This theme speaks to emerging adult college graduates being drawn to careers in which they have had a long-standing interest, often dating back to the childhood or teenage years. Interview participants in this study often entered college with a dream of moving into a career they have been interested in for a long time – even if they do not know much about what that career really demands.

For example, several participants including Janice, Angela, Paul, and Kathy expressed a sense of surprise at what it would take to progress in their chosen career path. Angela expressed her surprise at the realities of her chosen profession and shared, "I wish my department would have told me [more about what to expect]," and later in the interview talked about the "reality check" of getting rejection emails, which helped her realize she needed to pursue a master's degree to get where she wanted in her profession. The surprise is echoed in Paul's interview as he wished that professors would "talk about the reality of life after college," and later shared that "professors were not open in talking about what was required to move into the profession," and so he did not know what to expect. These sentiments seem to be related to the career transition self-efficacy domain of Progressing in a Chosen Career Path.

In the quantitative component of the study, having a feeling of adulthood was a significant predictor for Progressing in a Chosen Career Path. This may indicate that the theme of following a dream career, without a full understanding of what it takes to move forward in that career, may occur in conjunction with a less developed perception of adulthood. While the findings of this research need further study, they raise an

interesting idea that could be of interest to colleges and universities in part, because incoming college students are traditionally in the early stages of emerging adulthood.

Internships as valuable and enjoyable learning experiences. When talking about aspects of college life that impacted their transition success, several participants mentioned internships as having a positive impact. Internship experiences provided different kinds of value for various participants. For example, Janice shared that her internship helped her identify a career field of choice *after* she had started down a path that was not fulfilling for her. Also, it was through a mandatory practicum experience that Maria realized her love of radio.

For Elliot, it was an internship at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center that confirmed his choice and passion for working as a psychologist specializing in substance abuse treatment. Ben appreciated his internship for the learning opportunity it provided. During his interview he stated that he "learned 10 times as much" in his internship as he did during his entire college career. Lastly, for Angela, the unpaid internship she accepted after graduation allows her to stay fluent in her field of choice and is a fulfilling placeholder in her life until she can get her master's degree and move into her field, full-time.

From the perspective of career transition self-efficacy, internships and other opportunities that provide real-life career experiences have the potential to foster career transition self-efficacy development in multiple domains. If graduates are able to increase their career transition self-efficacy, some of the challenges of the post-graduate transition may be mitigated. Internships also have the potential to aid identity development, an important factor in emerging adulthood.

Leaving college and pursuing life after college is challenging. Regardless of whether participants saw their transition as successful or not, seven participants acknowledged that the transition from college to career is challenging in some ways, and required a period of adjustment. Both Maria and Anna (vignette not included in Chapter 4) talked about the social transition of not having friends close by, and of missing the environment of college. Others, including Kathy, Nathan, and Adam (vignette not included in Chapter 4) mentioned that the transition was challenging, in part, because they needed to be more skilled in certain areas. For Kathy, interviewing and networking were challenges, while Nathan talked about learning how to be assertive in the workplace as a challenge he faced. A third area of challenge that was identified by participants in this study was the job search itself.

Four participants talked about the search as being a difficult thing to navigate. Janice searched for 10 months before she "accepted that [she was] not going to find a job with [her] bachelor's degree." Kathy talked about her search saying, "I stopped counting after 100 jobs I applied for…" For Paul the frustration of searching for a job continues. Although he graduated four years ago, he is currently unemployed and has not held a long-term job since graduation. For these participants, the search itself has been the most difficult component of the transition. The inability to secure a position (or challenges in securing a position) after graduation was a significant point of frustration for participants in this study. It may be that securing a job, even a job outside the graduate's intended field, may be a necessary component to continued development through the transition process.

Impact of individual relationships with faculty and administrators. Asked broadly about things that impacted their transition from college to career, several participants mentioned specific interactions with individuals on campus. Those interactions covered the continuum from positive to negative, but all were impactful. Maria mentioned a couple of Communications professors who were "fantastic" and who helped prepare her to "be an adult and move into the real world." Another participant, Anna (vignette not included in Chapter 4), described her advisor, saying "I owe her a lot for coaching me to do different things… she was fantastic. I can't even put into words how great she was." On the other end of the spectrum, Paul said that his professors "were not open to talking about what was required to move into the profession… I was unprepared for next steps" and Nathan described taking "some bad advice from a professor…"

The finding that individual relationships at college are an important factor in a transition could be used to inform more purposeful interaction with advisors and professors on campus. Colleges and universities may want to review the role of advisors on campus to ensure that interactions with students are being fully utilized for their potential positive impact. These relationships could be catalysts for self-efficacy growth and identity clarification. Further, training advisors in ways to boost self-efficacy of students and graduates would be a simple, inexpensive way to have a positive impact on students. Training could include Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (1982), but may also explore other common sense ways to build self-efficacy.

Age as an important factor in success. Another theme that emerged from interviews was that age may be an important factor in a successful college to career transition. While the quantitative analysis did not find age at graduation to be a significant predictor of career transition self-efficacy, interview participants mentioned age as a contributor (or potential contributor) to transition success. Specifically, participants felt that a higher age at graduation or a higher age at the start of college had been or would be beneficial to their transition.

Related to this theme, Nathan mentioned impacts that include a higher level of maturity and more life experience, while Kathy suggested that a later start age for college would have allowed more time to figure out what she wanted to do and would have provided a more practical outlook on life. Ben acknowledged that he was a very disciplined student, in part due to his time in the Army and deployment to Iraq, but that for other students, being older may help develop a similar level of discipline. Elliot felt very strongly about the issue, stating that, "I think that it is kind of ridiculous that we expect 18-year old kids to pick a career path…" and a little later in the interview, "you just have to find yourself first and find out what you really want to do…."

According to these participants, there are important and specific ways increased age had (or could have) a positive impact on the transition from college to career.

Optimism and hope. At the end of the interview process, the majority of these emerging adults were hopeful about their future, despite the (sometimes significant) challenges they have already faced. This sense of overarching optimism is a common trait of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004) and, in the cases of two participants, this sense of optimism and hope may have resulted in a perceived level of self-efficacy that was

inappropriately high, given some realities of the career. Maria mentioned that she had a higher career transition self-efficacy right after graduation than she does now, several years later. She attributed this to an unrealistically inflated sense of self-efficacy that accompanied her graduation. She shared, "When you first graduate from college you have this mindset that it is all open and it is going to be easy to just go get a job." Later she mentioned that her level of self-efficacy since then has dropped and is now at a more accurate level. Angela described a similar sense of high self-efficacy at graduation, accompanied by the feeling that she would be one of the few people in her field to secure a position without a master's degree. Both these women describe having a sense of self-efficacy (about moving forward in their professions) that was unfounded and not supported by the realities of their career choice. It may be that the optimism of emerging adulthood is a disservice to alumni in terms of having a realistic understanding of their path to success in moving into a career of their choosing.

Discussion

In this section, the findings from this research are more deeply explored. In addition, interpretations are offered with an eye towards understanding the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy, and the experience of transitioning from college to work in the first four years after completing an undergraduate degree.

Relationship Between Career Transition Self-Efficacy and Perceived Adulthood Status

The findings of this study show that perceived adulthood status is connected to career transition self-efficacy in a potentially powerful way. This study sought to better

understand the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy. From the data, it appears that the relationship is such that perceived adulthood is a significant predictor (in part and in whole) of career transition self-efficacy. This has potentially important implications for colleges and universities because it may help them identify ways to positively impact the college to work transition of recent graduates.

As seen in Chapter 2, self-efficacy is shown in literature to be a predictor of success in life after college. In Eden and Aviran's 1993 study, unemployed adults who had higher levels of general self-efficacy were more likely to secure positions than their lower self-efficacy counterparts. In addition, as Lubbers et al. (2005) demonstrated in their study of job self-efficacy in a college student population, job self-efficacy is significantly related to positive job well-being. Similarly, Kanfer et al. (2001) did a meta-analysis of studies on job search behavior and employment outcomes. From this analysis, researchers found that higher levels of job search self-efficacy reported higher levels of search behavior. In addition, job search self-efficacy was significantly associated with a shorter length of employment.

Because it is a measure that is significantly related to success, colleges and universities should seek to develop self-efficacy in their students and graduates – particularly because colleges and universities are seen as having a responsibility for ensuring graduate success after graduation (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007). Knowing how these variables are related provides important information upon which colleges and universities can act, to help graduates succeed in the college to career transition. Although Bandura's research (1982) identifies four

primary sources of self-efficacy, there may be many ways to develop career transition self-efficacy in students and graduates. For example, it would be valuable to see whether activities such as creating a post-graduate plan with an advisor, having conversations with alumni who work in careers of interest to the graduate, or working in an on-campus job could help build career transition self-efficacy. Taking purposeful action on initiatives to increase self-efficacy in graduates would demonstrate a college's or university's commitment to improving the quality of "graduates' integration into the job market," which Gallifa (2009, p. 229) says is one of the most important outcomes for colleges and universities.

Another finding that warrants additional discussion is the relatively high level of career transition self-efficacy reported by respondents, and the relatively lower perceived adulthood status of respondents. The relatively high level of career transition self-efficacy that was seen in the quantitative component of this study was echoed in some of the participant interviews. For example, Maria feels confident in her ability to move forward in her career, but still lives at home with her parents, which causes her to feel "less than adult." Several other participants also mentioned that living away from parents was a requirement for feeling fully adult.

Interestingly, some participants described a high level of career transition self-efficacy despite the feeling that their transition from college to career had not been a successful one. For example, Angela feels that her transition has not been successful but, in part due to her decision to attend graduate school, feels strong self-efficacy about moving into her chosen career. It may be that emerging adulthood, while enabling graduates to maintain a sense of optimism, may also set them up for frustration and

disappointment if that optimism leads to an inflated sense of career transition self-efficacy. It may also indicate a disconnect between the confidence they feel at what they are capable of doing related to career transition self-efficacy, and what ultimately ends up occurring.

That career transition self-efficacy levels were found to be relatively high while perceived adulthood status was relatively low is interesting to this study because it indicates, at least on this broadest level, that emerging adults may have high career transition self-efficacy even when they are in the less developed range of emerging adulthood. Also interesting to note is that the standard deviations for items related to perceived adulthood status are much larger than the standard deviations related to career transition self-efficacy, in fact they are almost twice as large, indicating a much broader range of responses related to perceived adulthood than the range of responses for career transition self-efficacy. One possibility for this phenomenon is that items in the *Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory* may have been seen, by some participants, as somewhat of a dichotomy with responses on either end of the continuum and fewer responses in the middle ranges.

Public University Attendance as a Predictor of Career Transition Self-Efficacy

One of the more impactful findings of this study was that attendance at a public university predicted higher levels of career transition self-efficacy. This finding is impactful for several reasons. From a value standpoint, private colleges argue that they provide a higher value, in some manner, which would warrant the higher price point for attending private colleges (College Board, 2013). For example, White reports that private colleges provide a more intimate academic experience, which leads to a faster

progression in learning (2003). However, if that more intimate academic experience does not lead to increased career transition self-efficacy, there may be students and graduates who experience exacerbated difficulty in managing their college to career transition. In the changing landscape of higher education, society is looking for evidence that a college education leads graduates to career success. This notion requires exploration of the role of colleges and universities.

We know from research that colleges are seen as responsible for ensuring the success of their graduates (Casner-Lotto, 2006; Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007) and, that success is often measured by the attainment of employment (Gallifa, 2009). Consequently, when data indicate that attendance at a public institution is a predictor of higher career transition self-efficacy, which may inform success after graduation, the perceived value provided by a public institution may be buoyed while the perceived value of a private institution may be decreased.

This assumes, however, that the role of colleges and universities is to prepare graduates to move into careers. For some students and their families, this is indeed the case. However, there are many, many other reasons people choose to attend a particular college or university, some of which have little to do with pursuing a career or building self-efficacy. For example, some may desire a type of college or university where they can immerse themselves in academics – learning for the sake of learning – and this population may be less concerned with career transition self-efficacy.

Due to the various reasons students choose a particular college, and due to multiple perceptions about the role of colleges and universities, it is important for

colleges and universities to recruit and admit students whose ideas about the role of college, is similar to their own. In instances where this alignment does not occur, there may be a disconnect between student and family expectations, and what the college or university is delivering. For example, a student whose goal is to move from college to career and who sees the role of the university or college as preparing him or her for that transition may have unmet expectations if they attend a college whose view is that the role of the institution is to provide academic immersion and intellectual stimulation without focusing on careers after graduation.

Many students and families may agree with the College Scorecard (2013) that employment success is a factor to be used when choosing a college or university, and agree with Gallifa (2009) that a graduate's transition into the job market is one of the most important outcomes for colleges and universities. For this population, data suggesting that public university attendance predicts higher levels of career transition self-efficacy may serve to promote public universities as institutions of choice.

Another reason the finding is impactful is because private colleges and universities have a stronger six-year graduation rate than public institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), which is sometimes attributed to the fact that "private education is conducted in more intimate settings that promote greater student-faculty interaction and more rapid progress toward the completion of degrees" (White, 2003, p. 52). Given the higher graduation rates and the argument posited that an intimate setting allows for more rapid progress, it seems that a setting like this would also foster more rapid progress towards career transition self-efficacy, especially if colleges were purposeful in trying to build this characteristic in their students. On the other hand,

public universities may have curricula that are more focused on post-graduate careers, positively impacting career transition self-efficacy. For these reasons, it is interesting that the data suggest that public universities may be more effective at producing graduates with higher levels of career transition self-efficacy.

In the private college environment, which may already foster close relationships with advisors and faculty, incorporating interventions to increase self-efficacy would be a relatively easy and inexpensive way to help support the transition to career. In accordance with Saks' 1995 findings, which show that people with low self-efficacy benefit most from interventions, identifying students and alumni with low career transition self-efficacy may enable colleges and universities to make a significant impact on students' post-graduate success.

Certainly, these findings are moderated by the fact that this study included only two public institutions, both of which were located in Pennsylvania and this is just one small study. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there may be many reasons, besides transition to the workforce or gaining self-efficacy around the transition, that students choose to attend college or decide which college to attend. Further, the findings could be a result of other factors not measured in this study. For example, it may be that the population of student who chooses a public college may enter college already possessing a higher career transition self-efficacy. Nonetheless, the findings of the study are significant and may have important implications for both public and private colleges and universities.

Challenges of the College to Career Transition

Regardless of whether they attended a public or private college or university, most interview participants agreed that the college to career transition can be challenging. Because the transition experience is challenging, there is potential for colleges and universities to make a significant, positive impact on the way graduates experience their post-college transition. While participants agreed the transition was challenging, there was a distinction between the descriptions of challenges by those who had higher career transition self-efficacy, and those who had lower career transition self-efficacy.

All three of the participants who consider their transition to be successful and who are fulfilled, including Maria, Nathan, and Ben, mentioned the challenges in terms of specific skill development needs or specific points of adjustment including not having friends close by, developing assertiveness, or understanding how to deal with "office politics." On the other hand, participants who are unfulfilled or frustrated talked about the challenge of the transition in a more pervasive way that seemed to impact multiple facets of their lives. For example, Janice made statements about the stress of the situation several times throughout the interview, "I was stressed out!" Paul also had an experience that impacted a broad scope of his life. He described the feeling of being "worn out" and "mentally drained." Further, those who were unfulfilled or frustrated had a lower career transition self-efficacy than those who were fulfilled and who described the challenges of the transition in terms of localized skill development needs. It seems that a strong career transition self-efficacy, in conjunction with some measure of success in the search process, allows graduates to manage the challenges of the transitions in a way that is less impactful to their overall well-being.

In some ways it seems that finding a job after graduation may be reminiscent of the career transition equivalent of the lowest level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs because it may be that securing a job after graduation is the foundational step on which all the other possible transition topics must rest. Support for this idea is found in literature. For example, in Wood and Kaczynski's 2007 case study of 18 college graduates, participants mentioned that the best preparation they received for transitioning to the world of work came from part-time work experiences. This may mean that securing a position is an important first step in the transition process. Also, emerging adults who delay college by one year to work or travel have a higher level of confidence (King, 2011), which may also be an indicator that securing a position after graduation would be an important catalyst for self-efficacy and a successful transition.

Lastly, the concept that securing initial employment after graduation may be a vital first step in gaining career transition self-efficacy and in having a successful transition experience is also supported by Bandura's work on sources of self-efficacy. Opportunities to practice behaviors, and watching others successfully perform behaviors related to a certain skill, are two of Bandura's four primary self-efficacy sources (1982). After emerging adults secure employment and are in a work environment, they may experience more occasions to practice career transition behaviors and to see others perform career transition activities, compared to the time prior to securing employment.

Until graduates get to the stage where they have secured a position, they may be less able to articulate goals and success levels in other aspects of their transition. As Paul shared, "I don't really have the ability to plan long-term right now … I don't really have the freedom to choose beyond this moment [because I have bills to pay]." If securing a

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job after graduation really exists as a foundational step to a successful transition, without which a graduate is unable to move forward, it adds intensity to the transition and the expectations that accompany it. It seems this should impact the level of commitment colleges and universities put into supporting the graduates who are challenged in this way.

Despite studies that show an expectation that colleges and universities are responsible for ensuring the success of their graduates after college (Crebert et al., 2004; Gallifa, 2009; Grubb & Lazerson, 2005; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008; Wood & Kaczynski, 2007), it is not clear whether colleges would agree. If colleges and universities agreed that their role is to prepare students to enter the workforce after graduation, it would seem that colleges and universities would make a significant commitment to this responsibility and would allocate resources accordingly. To the extent that some colleges and universities may not allocate significant resources to address the post-graduate challenges faced by their students and alumni, it may indicate that these institutions of higher education do not accept responsibility for the integration of their graduates into the workforce. In fact, they may argue that their role is something entirely different.

The Role of Individual Relationships with College Faculty and Administrators

In addition to sharing the common experience of the college to career transition as a challenging one, participants had similar experiences in that individual relationships with people at their college or university were important to their transition process. Maria, for example, said that she had two or three professors who helped prepare her for life after college. Elliot had an experience at the opposite end of the spectrum, as he

shared that taking "bad advice from one professor" delayed his transition into a career. In thinking of the purpose of this study to better understand the relationship between emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy, two things come to mind. First, because emerging adulthood is a time of personal and professional exploration and a time of identity formation, it seems that individual relationships on campus with mentors— whether those mentors are advisors, professors, career services professionals, or others— could be important to a graduate's growth through emerging adulthood.

Second, individual relationships could be vehicles for the purposeful development of career transition self-efficacy. For example, Bandura (1982) posits that verbal acknowledgement of abilities is a source of self-efficacy, as is seeing someone else perform the behavior. Individual relationships can be vehicles for self-efficacy development and, should those individual relationships continue to be fostered post-graduation, the benefit would continue throughout the post-college transitional phase. And, while Bandura's work focuses on four primary sources of self-efficacy, there may be other ways that advisors, professional staff, and faculty could bolster student and alumni self-efficacy as well. If colleges and universities recognize the benefits of individual interactions with student and alumni, and if they see how they could play a role in fostering self-efficacy, they may be more willing to implement programs or systems that support these relationships.

Age of College Attendance

Four interview participants mentioned age at graduation and the overall age at which they attended college, as impactful to their post-college career transition. Specifically, Kathy, Ben, Elliot, and Nathan each mentioned that graduating at an older

age did, or would have, helped them be more prepared for the college to work transition. This idea aligns with current research of emerging adults, which finds that people in this age group are making decisions about the type of work they would like to do, long-term, in their mid to late-twenties (Arnett, 2000; European Group for Integrated Social Research, 2001; Shulman et al., 2006), an age that is past the traditional college graduation age. If they are waiting to make decisions about long-term work until years after graduation from college, it seems possible that making choices related to a college degree, and graduating from college at a later age may be helpful to the college to work transition. This finding is intriguing because, although it aligns with the current research on emerging adults, age at graduation from college did not show up in the quantitative component of the study as a significant predictor of career transition self-efficacy.

For Kathy and Elliot, the age at which one starts college and the age at which one graduates from college requires distinction. When asked if the age at which they graduated from college impacted their transition, both redirected the question, responding that the graduation age did not have an impact, but the age at which they started college did (or could have). Both Kathy and Elliot talked about how 18-year olds are unprepared to select a major, and described not really knowing what they were getting into when they started college. Gaining a stronger sense of vocational identity is one purpose for the exploration that occurs during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) and at the very early stages of emerging adulthood, that clarity about identity may not have occurred. Staff et al. (2010) concur, finding that people in this age group may not have clear career goals, yet. Elliot said that he was lucky that it ended up working out for him and he became

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passionate about a field that is working out so far. Kathy has not yet had that experience of success.

This presents an interesting possibility for future research, which could look at whether the age at which someone starts college impacts their transition. It may seem that focusing on the age at which college is started would find results similar to the findings of this study, which posed the question in terms of graduation age. However, given that participants made the distinction themselves, that the predictor was not graduation age but rather, the age at which college is started, may indicate that framing the question differently would allow participants to respond in a way that more authentically represents their experience.

In addition to seeing value in starting college later, Elliot also mentioned the value of having students declare a major or field of choice, at a later age. This theme is of particular interest for this study because if future research supported the idea that starting college at an older age, or waiting longer to make a choice about academic and career focus would result in more post-grad success, colleges and families may rethink the traditional college timeline. There may also be some creative strategies colleges and universities could implement to take advantage of this possibility. For example, perhaps some college programs would be made longer, incorporating academic breaks that allow for internships or other real-life work experience to be gained.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, the sample size for the qualitative component of the research is small. Ten participants were interviewed and the subsequent emergent themes stem from just a few interviews and narratives each. The

primary function of narrative research is to understand individual experiences and so, the analysis of emergent themes occurred only after the primary work of developing narratives was complete. The researcher reviewed all transcripts and final vignettes, with an eye towards themes that showed up multiple times—and in some instances the theme may have only shown up in three or four of the interviews. Ultimately, conclusions cannot be drawn from this small of a sample.

Second, participants in this study come from a diverse array of backgrounds and experiences and this study did not attempt to control for other factors in their lives that may have impacted the results. Outside of the demographics gathered for this study, there may be any number of factors that contribute to an individual participant's career transition self-efficacy. For example, it may be that public universities attract students who already have a higher level of career transition self-efficacy, or there could be socio-economic factors that lead to higher career transition self-efficacy or to a stronger sense of adulthood. This study did not account for these, or other possible factors, that may contribute to the development of career transition self-efficacy.

Third, the primary focus of this study was to understand the relationship between career transition self-efficacy and emerging adulthood. The traditional age of college graduation is around 22 years of age, which contributed to the fact that the majority of respondents were around the age of 22 when they graduated with their undergraduate degree. While this is not surprising, it did mean that only a small number of respondents to this study were in the higher ages of emerging adulthood at the time of graduation. This study would have been stronger if more non-traditionally aged college graduates had participated in the study, which could have been accomplished by increasing the number

of institutions participating. Having a much smaller representation of emerging adults who were 25-28 years of age at the time they graduated from college is a limitation to this study.

Fourth, the study relied on respondents to self-report on items related to their perceived adulthood status and their career transition self-efficacy. There are many reasons why a self-reported status in adulthood or self-efficacy assessment could be inaccurate. Respondents may have reasons for reporting inaccurately. For example, they may not want to admit that they are fully adult (or that they are not), or they may not want to be identified as someone with low self-efficacy. Additionally, the self-reporting could be inaccurate due to a misunderstanding about how to complete the instrument or how to respond to specific items in the instrument.

Lastly, the colleges and universities were selected purposefully, as were the interview participants. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify participating institutions of higher education because the researcher wanted to ensure there was a mixture of both private and public colleges and universities represented and because colleges and universities at which the researcher had contacts were more accessible in terms of garnering participation. Purposeful sampling was used for the interview component of the research to ensure the 10 interview participants represented diversity in age, age at graduation, gender, private or public college attendance, level of career transition self-efficacy, and perceived adulthood status. A purposeful sampling process negatively impacts the ability to generalize findings outside of the sample.

Implications for Practice

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings suggest a number of possible

implications for practice that may serve to ease the challenges of the college to career

transition, to aid the development of career transition self-efficacy, and to improve the

chances of a successful transition for emerging adult graduates. Further, these potential

practice implications may help colleges and universities better understand the transition

experience of their emerging adult college graduates and the relationship between

emerging adulthood and career transition self-efficacy. Colleges and universities may

consider:

- **Encouraging college faculty and administrators to be mindful about**

  interactions with students and graduates. Specifically, these individuals

  may identify ways to foster self-efficacy and identity exploration in

  conversations with students and graduates. The findings in this study suggest

  that individual relationships may be an important factor in the college to

  career transition, and therefore, may be natural ways to support this

  development. Training advisors and professors on ways to foster this growth

  in students and alumni would be a low-cost initiative that could have a

  positive impact on graduate success.

- **Including more internship, externship, and other career training**

  program options in the college curriculum. These real-life experiences

  could take place at various points in an academic program. This study found

  that experience in a chosen field is valuable to emerging adult college

  graduates and has the potential to aid the development of career transition

self-efficacy. In addition, these experiences allow graduates and students to better understand the roles they plan to pursue after college. Lastly, with a deeper understanding of the needs of the role, students and graduates can better plan for their career. Developing a career plan may be one of the most important things colleges can do to support the needs of emerging adult graduates (Arnett, 2012).

- **Expanding assessments to move beyond academic evaluation.** Utilizing assessments to measure factors related to post-graduate success (e.g. career transition self-efficacy, and perceived adulthood) would help identify students and alumni who may need support. This practice would also help college administrators and faculty better understand ways they can positively impact a student's college to career transition experience.

- **Providing specific information to students about various job titles and what is required to move into those jobs.** Participants in this study felt that, at times, professors and administrators expected students to learn the information themselves, or were unwilling to talk about how to get into a certain field. Being purposeful about helping students learn the educational and professional trajectories of various career fields may help them define a career path that is a good fit for them.

- **Expanding the length of some college programs or incorporating academic breaks during which students could gain experience in their field.** Allowing students to have more exploratory time in the early stages of their academic careers and incorporating one or more internship opportunities

into the academic experience may foster student self-efficacy and help

develop student understanding of career paths and what they may need to do

to reach their goals. Many private liberal arts colleges encourage students to

wait until junior year to declare a major, while public universities may

encourage students to declare in their first year. Allowing more time to

explore, before deciding on an academic and career path, may be helpful to

student development and growth.

- **Expanding or modifying recruiting strategy to attract students who are older than traditional college age.** These students may be more prepared to make a decision about the long-term career choice that is right for them. In addition, they may experience post-graduate success more quickly or easily than traditionally aged students. Finally, students who are older than traditional college age may be able to serve as mentors and guides for other students.

Future Research

There were several findings from this study that may warrant additional future

research. First, this study included two private colleges and universities and two public

universities. Expanding the scope of this study to include more institutions of higher

education would be beneficial. Second, a study that includes a larger percentage of

participants who are non-traditionally aged college graduates would bolster the

understanding of the transition experience of graduates in the later stages of emerging

adulthood. Further, in retrospect there are variables that could be important to better

understanding the college to career transition for emerging adults, which were not

included in this study. For example, future studies may want to look at factors such as participants' choice of major, amount of work experience prior to and during college attendance, and size of the institution attended, as potential predictors of career transition self-efficacy. Future studies may also look at the roles of grit and perseverance to a successful college to career transition.

In addition, age at graduation from college was not found to be a significant predictor of career transition self-efficacy but was identified as an important factor by the participants who were interviewed. One interesting finding was the distinction made between age at graduation and the age at which they started college. Two participants argued that the former did not impact their transition, but the latter *did*. Both participants felt that starting college later (or declaring an academic and professional path later) would have had a positive impact on their transition. Additional participants felt graduating at an older age did have a positive impact on their success after graduation. Additional research about how age in college impacts post-graduate success may be important to understanding the graduate transition experience and also to identifying additional ways institutions of higher education can support that transition.

Another area of future research is the overall sense of optimism that was exhibited by interview participants, a characteristic that is prevalent in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Murphy et al., 2010). Specifically, it would be important to understand the extent to which this sense of optimism may have a positive or negative impact on career transition self-efficacy. For example, a high level of optimism may lead to levels of self-efficacy that are incongruent with the reality of career options and choices. Gaining

knowledge about how an optimistic outlook may impact the college to career transition would be conducive to a greater understanding of the transition experience, overall.

Also, Arnett (2004) identified the development of vocational identity as a key component of emerging adulthood. The relationship between the development of vocational identity and career transition self-efficacy may be important to understand in terms of helping graduates prepare for a successful transition to the world of work.

Lastly, further research on public university attendance as a predictor of career transition self-efficacy would be important to understanding how college choice impacts the college to career transition. Research that attempts to control for factors besides college choice, which could impact the career transition self-efficacy of graduates from public and private colleges, would be valuable.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented a summary of this study and interpretations of the findings. In addition, implications for colleges and universities were addressed, and areas of future research were suggested. From this study a better understanding of the relationship between career transition self-efficacy and emerging adulthood may be achieved. Further, findings suggest that adulthood status, type of college attended, and the age at which one attends college are important factors in better understanding the college to career transition experience of emerging adults in their first four years after graduation.

In the changing landscape of higher education, American society is demanding that colleges and universities demonstrate the contribution they make toward their graduates' post-college success. The role of colleges and universities is becoming more focused on college as preparation for career and, in some instances, there seems to be a

disconnect between how colleges and universities view their roles and how society views

the roles of colleges and universities. This study has identified specific practices that

institutions of higher education could implement to move towards meeting the needs of

students, graduates, their families, and American society. This study has shown that

there are actions colleges and universities can take to enhance the post-graduate success

of their graduates.

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Career Transition Preparedness Scale

Perceived Adulthood Status Inventory

Please answer the questions below, using the following scale. Indicate your chosen response by "clicking" on the oval, next to the statement, that is most accurate for you.

	No - 0	1	2	3 – Definitely
	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

	No - 0	**1**	**2**	**3 - Definitely**
Do you feel like you have reached adulthood?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Are you financially independent?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Do you feel like you have a clear concept of your personal identity?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Do you know the kind of work you would find satisfying for the long-term?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

Career Transition Appraisal Inventory

This inventory is designed to help us get a better understanding of career transition

activities that are difficult during the first four years following graduation from college.

Please rate how confident you are that you can perform these activities **as of right now.**

Rate your degree of confidence by selecting the option that best describes your current

confidence level.

How much confidence do you have that you can:

	No Confidence - 0	1	2	3 - Complete Confidence
1. Persist in performing difficult job-related tasks?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
2. Engage in a critical reflection of your skills, strengths, and weaknesses?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
3. Implement a process for keeping track of your professional successes?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
4. Discern appropriate levels of formality during various work experiences?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
5. Ask for help when you need it?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
6. Work as part of a team?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
7. Learn the norms of a new workplace?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

8. Introduce yourself to new colleagues at work?	◉	◉	◉	◉
9. Be self-directed in your work?	◉	◉	◉	◉
10. Learn new job related tasks?	◉	◉	◉	◉
11. Ask your supervisor for feedback on specific tasks or performance?	◉	◉	◉	◉
12. Understand how your work responsibilities contribute to organizational priorities?	◉	◉	◉	◉
13. Prepare for unpredictable experiences at work?	◉	◉	◉	◉
14. Comfortably participate in professional and personal conversations?	◉	◉	◉	◉
15. Demonstrate socially acceptable workplace behavior?	◉	◉	◉	◉
16. Persist in the face of ambiguous expectations?	◉	◉	◉	◉

17. Solve problems that arise related to your job responsibilities?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
18. Seek responsibilities and assignments that will help you reach your goals?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
19. Meet professional goals you set for yourself?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
20. Manage stressful work situations?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
21. Communicate with people at all levels of your organization?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
22. Set professional goals?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
23. Identify next steps in your career?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
24. Adjust your approach when organizational needs change?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
25. Cope with obstacles at work?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
26. Interact with a supervisor?	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

27. Stay in contact with family and friends? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

28. Make a choice about a career path that is a good long-term fit for you? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

29. Openly discuss work challenges with friends or family? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

30. Handle problems related to relationships at work? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

31. Ask for clarification on performing work tasks, when needed? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

32. Develop friendships? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

33. Understand the requirements of your position? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

34. Relate to multiple generations? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

35. Accurately assess your own performance? ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

36. Negotiate salary and benefits ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

37. Maintain a
consistently strong
work ethic?   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙

38. Understand how
your colleagues'
work responsibilities
contribute to   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙   ⊙
organizational
priorities?

Demographic Questionnaire

What is the name of the college or university you attended?

Please complete the following items:

> Name:
> Current age:
> At what age did you graduate from the college or

university above?

What is your gender?

- ⊙ Male
- ⊙ Female
- ⊙ Transgender

Are you willing to be contacted to participate in an interview related to this study?

- ⊙ Yes
- ⊙ No

Thank you for your willingness to participate in an interview for this study. Please

provide your name, phone number, and email address so we can contact you to schedule

an interview.

Email Address:

Preferred Telephone Number:

Appendix B

Domains and Contributing Literature for the Career Transition Appraisal

Inventory

Dr. S.P. Brown suggested adding definitions for each of these domains.

Navigating Work Responsibilities – 13 items (#'s 1, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 24, 25, 31, 33, 35) (Murphy et al., 2010; Liptak, J. J., 2010)

- Manage stressful work situations? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Learn new job related tasks? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Ask for clarification on performing work tasks, when needed? (Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Adjust your approach when organizational needs change? (Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Prepare for unpredictable experiences at work? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Persist in performing difficult job-related tasks?
- Understand the requirements of your position? (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Solve problems that arise related to my job responsibilities? (Saks, 1995)
- Persist in the face of ambiguous expectations? (Crebert et al., 2004)
- Be self-directed in your work? (Crebert et al., 2004; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Communicate with people at all levels of your organization? (Wood & Kaczynski, 2007; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Accurately assess your own performance? (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Cope with obstacles at work? (Fouad & Bynner, 2008)

Developing a Support Network – 7 items (#'s 5, 8, 14, 27, 29, 32, 34) (Murphy et al., 2010)

- Introduce yourself to new colleagues at work? (Murphy et al., 2010) (Dr. A. E. Abele suggested this be more specific than just "people")

- Comfortably participate in professional and personal conversations? (Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Develop friendships? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Relate to multiple generations? (Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Stay in contact with family and friends? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Openly discuss work challenges with friends or family? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Ask for help when you need it? (Murphy et al., 2010)

Progressing in Chosen Career Path – 9 items (#'s 2, 3, 11, 18, 19, 22, 23, 28, 36)

(Murphy et al., 2010; Liptak, J. J., 2010)

- Identify next steps in your career? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Set professional goals? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Meet professional goals you set for yourself? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Ask your supervisor for feedback on specific tasks or performance? (Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Make a choice about a career path that is a good long-term fit for you?
- Implement a process for keeping track of your professional successes?
- Engage in a critical reflection of your skills, strengths, and weaknesses? (Crebert et al., 2004)
- Seek responsibilities and assignments that will help you reach your goals? (Day & Allen, 2004)
- Negotiate salary and benefits? (Dr. Y. Lin)

Understanding Workplace Culture – 9 items (#'s 4, 6, 7, 12, 15, 26, 30, 37, 38) (Murphy et al., 2010; Liptak, J. J., 2010)

- Discern appropriate levels of formality during various work experiences? (Murphy et al., 2010)
- Handle problems related to relationships at work? (Saks, 1995)
- Interact with a supervisor? (Crebert et al., 2004)
- Understand how your work responsibilities contribute to organizational priorities? (Crebert et al., 2004) (Dr. A.E. Abele suggested that "team

dynamics" was too difficult to understand, so I created this and the below item instead)

- Understand how your colleagues' work responsibilities contribute to organizational priorities?
- Demonstrate socially acceptable workplace behavior?   (Crebert et al., 2004) (Dr. A.E. Abele suggested "professional etiquette" may not be clear, so I modified it to this)
- Work as part of a team? (Crebert et al., 2004)
- Learn the norms of a new workplace? (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008)
- Maintain a consistently strong work ethic? (Dr. Y. Lin)

Email to Panel of Experts

Good evening, Dr. _____

My name is Tammy J. Halstead and I am a doctoral student working on my dissertation at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. The focus of my dissertation is the career transition self-efficacy of recent college graduates.

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I read your article, "_____" in the -_____ as part of my dissertation research. As an expert in the field, I wonder if you would be willing to review my survey instrument, the *Career Transition Preparedness Scale,* and provide feedback and insight on the extent to which the instrument measures the intended domains?

I have attached the instrument, which consists of a 4-item perceived adulthood scale and a 35-item career transition self-efficacy scale, here. I am also attaching a document outlining the intended domains and contributing literature for the scale, for your reference.

Thank you for considering this request. I truly appreciate any feedback that you can offer. Please let me know if there is additional information that would be helpful.

With appreciation,

Tammy J. Halstead

Doctoral Student, East Stroudsburg University
w: 717-291-4362
c: 717-419-1574
email: tammyhalstead1@gmail.com

Director of Alumni Advising & Development
Franklin & Marshall College
Lancaster, PA 17604

Appendix D

Emails to Participants

Initial Email

Subject: _____ alumni: request for assistance from doctoral student

Dear ${m://FirstName},

Good morning. I am a doctoral student working in partnership with _____ (college or university) on an important study that is part of my dissertation research, and I am writing to request your assistance. Will you please take a few short moments to complete a survey about your transition from college to "life after college?"

The information you share with me will be of great value in helping me complete this research project, the results of which could enhance our understanding of the experiences of the college to work transition. Thank you for your help!

Follow this link to the Survey:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Sincerely,

Tammy J. Halstead
East Stroudsburg University
717-419-1574
tammyhalstead1@gmail.com

Final Reminder Email

Subject Line: _____ alumni: Reminder about request from doctoral student

Good evening, _____.

I am writing to request your assistance. I am a doctoral student working in partnership

with _____ (college/university) on an important study that is part of my

dissertation research. Will you please take a few short moments to complete a survey

about your transition from college to "life after college?" **Thank you for your help!**

Follow this link to the Survey:
Take the Survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
https://iup.qualtrics.com/SE/?Q_SS=5707ry5eigwjMPP_datugf1NU7BHTYV&_=1

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
Click here to unsubscribe

Sincerely,

Tammy J. Halstead
East Stroudsburg University
717-419-1574
tammyhalstead1@gmail.com

Email to Request Interview

Subject Line: _____ Alumnus, Thank you! - Interview Schedule Request from doctoral student

Dear _____,

Thank you for completing the survey related to career self-efficacy in emerging adult college graduates. In your response you indicated a willingness to be contacted for an interview.

I am reaching out today to schedule a time to conduct the interview.

The interview will occur by phone and will take less than 1 hour of your time. The interview will be recorded, transcribed and coded for analysis purposes.

 I hope to conduct the interview before the week of _____. Might you be available for an interview next week? Please let me know whether any of the following dates and times work for your schedule.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

Tammy J. Halstead
717-419-1574
tammyhalstead1@gmail.com

_____

Faculty Sponsors: Dr. Douglas Lare, Professor and IUP Doctoral Chairman, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (PHONE 724.357.7730).

Shala Davis, East Stroudsburg University

Chair, Institutional Review Board
                            sdavis@esu.edu   (570) 422-3336

Appendix E

Informed Consent – Housed on the Qualtrics Webform

Thank you for your help! The information you share with me will be of great value in helping me complete this research project, the results of which could enhance our understanding of the experiences of emerging adulthood and the college to work transition.

I am studying the relationships among perceived adulthood status in emerging adulthood, career self-efficacy, age at graduation from college, and the transition from college to work in college graduates. This study is important in helping colleges and universities gain a better understanding of the unique and challenging conflux of two significant experiences (emerging adulthood and the college to work transition) which, for many college graduates, happen simultaneously.

This questionnaire will take about 10 minutes of your time.

Participation is voluntary. You can, of course, decline to answer any question as well as to stop participating at any time. If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me.

Please note that the information you provide will be kept confidential. Personally identifiable information you share will be housed on the web-based survey system, Qualtrics, and will be maintained by the researcher for three years before being destroyed. The researcher will not maintain personally identifiable information outside of this privacy-protected database.

Tammy J. Halstead (Principal Investigator)
tammyhalstead1@gmail.com   (717) 419-1574

By clicking "Continue" below, you will be taken to the survey. Thank you for your time and participation.

Faculty Sponsors: Dr. Douglas Lare, Professor and IUP Doctoral Chairman, East
        Stroudsburg
University of Pennsylvania and Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Professor, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITYOF PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS.

Shala Davis, East Stroudsburg University
Chair, Institutional Review Board
sdavis@esu.edu   (570)422-3336

East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania IRB Approval

Indiana University of Pennsylvania IRB Approval

Tammy,

On 3/31 I granted final approval and send letter to your faculty advisor. In addition, I sent the approval packet to IUP.

Dr.Davis

Shala E. Davis, Ph.D., FACSM, CSCS
Professor/Department Chair
Department of Exercise Science
Chair of Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects
East Stroudsburg University

(570) 422-3336

East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board
Human Research Review
Protocol # **ESU-IRB-040-1314**

Date: **February 28, 2014**
To: **Tammy Halstead and Douglas Lare**
From: **Shala E. Davis, Ph.D., IRB Chair**
Proposal Title: **"An Exploration of Career Self-Efficacy in Emerging Adult College Graduates"**

Review Requested: Exempted   Expedited   Full Review **X**
Review Approved: Exempted   Expedited   Full Review **X**

FULL RESEARCH

_____ Your full review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

_X__ Your full review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

_____ Your full review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit.

EXEMPTED RESEARCH

_____ Your exempted review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

_____ Your exempted review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

_____ Your exempted review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit, if appropriate.

EXPEDITED RESEARCH

_____ Your expedited review research proposal has been approved by the University IRB (12 months). Please provide the University IRB a copy of your Final Report at the completion of your research.

_____ Your expedited review research proposal has been approved with recommendations by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and **submit necessary documentation for full approval.**

_____ Your expedited review research proposal has not been approved by the University IRB. Please review recommendations provided by the reviewers and resubmit, if appropriate.

Please revise or submit the following:

1. **Include consent form for interview portion of protocol. Provide copy to IRB.**
2. **Add East Stroudsburg University to list of universities where data will be collected.**
3. **Provide documentation of permission from other universities assisting in data collection.**

Office of Assistant Dean for Research
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Stright Hall, Room 113
210 South Tenth Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1048

P 724-357-7730
F 724-357-2715
www.iup.edu/research

May 21, 2014

Tammy Halstead
106 E. Hoover Street
Mountville, PA 17554

Dear Ms. Hallstead:

Now that your research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, I have reviewed your Research Topic Approval Form and approved it.

The Thesis/Dissertation Manual, additional resources, and information to help you start writing can be found at http://www.iup.edu/graduatestudies/thesis/default.aspx.

Your RTAF indicates your anticipated graduation date as May 2015. This means that you must defend by **no later than April 1, 2015** and all necessary documents are due by this date. A description of the required documents can be accessed at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=116439. Your thesis or dissertation must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies & Research by April 15, 2015 if you desire to graduate by your anticipated date. You must apply for graduation by May 1, 2015. For deadlines for subsequent graduation dates, please access http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=16683.

Finally, if you change your topic, the scope or methodology of your project, or your committee, a new Research Topic Approval Form must be completed.

I wish you well and hope you find this experience to be rewarding.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research

TPM/bb

xc: Dr. Lara Luetkehans, Dean
     Dr. Robert Millward, Graduate Coordinator, IUP
     Dr. Douglas Lare, Graduate Coordinator
     & Dissertation Co-Chair, ESU
     Dr. Jennifer Rotigel, Dissertation Co-Chair, IUP
     Ms. Julie Bassaro, Secretary

Emails to Participating Institutions

Initial Email

Subject Line: Doctoral student request

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Administration and Leadership program that is run jointly through Indiana University of Pennsylvania and East Stroudsburg University. For my dissertation I will be studying the career self-efficacy of young alumni. In particular, I will be looking at the relationship between level of career self-efficacy and perceived status as an adult.

My goal is to learn more, and provide colleges with insight about, how alumni experience the transition from college to long-term career in the first 4 years after graduation. If we can learn more about this transition and the role of career self-efficacy in the transition, we can better prepare students and alumni to transition successfully - and we may be able to identify alumni who need additional support, earlier.

I am writing to request that _____ (college or university) alumni be included in this study. There are several benefits to participating in this study:

- Receive data on the career self-efficacy levels and perceived adulthood status of _____ (college or university) alumni who graduated in the last 4 years
- Gain an understanding of the transition experience of recent college graduates in the 4 years following graduation
- View career self-efficacy levels and perceived adulthood status results from the entire study, providing data on how _____ (college or university) alumni fare compared to other alumni
- This information could then be used as a catalyst for improved outreach and services to alumni.

If _____ (college or university) were a participating college, I would contact alumni via email to request their participation in a brief assessment; the email could be sent out by me or it could be sent through your office. Participants would be asked, as part of the survey, if they are willing to be interviewed for the study. All of their responses would remain confidential. I plan to begin collecting data in mid-June of this year.

Would you consider participating in this study? I look forward to hearing your thoughts and answering questions you may have.

Regards,

Tammy

Tammy J. Halstead, M.A.
Director of Alumni Advising and Development
Franklin & Marshall College
Office of Student & Post-Graduate Development
Direct: 717-291-4362 | Office: 717-291-4084
tammyhalstead1@gmail.com

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Verbal Consent

Hello, my name is Tammy J. Halstead. As I mentioned to you in my initial email, I am in the Leadership and Administration doctoral program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and am undertaking research that will be used as part of my dissertation.

I am studying the relationships among perceived status in emerging adulthood, career self-efficacy, age at graduation from college, and the transition from college to work in college graduates. This study is important in helping colleges and universities gain a better understanding of the unique and challenging conflux of two significant experiences (developing in emerging adulthood and transitioning from college to work) which, for many college graduates, happen simultaneously.

The information you share with me will be of great value in helping me complete this research project, the results of which could enhance our understanding of the experiences of emerging adulthood and the college to work transition.

The questions I will ask relate to your experiences during your transitions from college to work. This interview will take about 45 minutes to one hour of your time. I will record the interview and transcribe the interview so that I have an accurate record of the information you provide me. Please note that the information you provide will be kept confidential.

Participation is voluntary. You can, of course, decline to answer any question as well as to stop participating at any time.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me at any time. Do you have any questions about this research now? Do you agree to participate? May I record and transcribe our discussion?

If so, let's begin….

Interview Questions

1. Walk me through your transition from college student to career professional.
2. Tell me about your personal and career development since graduation from college.
3. What has been your experience in developing into an adult? Do you consider yourself to be an adult? Why or why not?
4. How do you define a successful transition from college to career? How has your experience compared to that ideal?
5. In what ways, if any, has your image of yourself as an adult impacted your transition from college to career?
6. How have you experienced the development of your personal and vocational identities?
7. How has your thinking and planning about your career changed since graduation?
8. What factors impacted your transition from college to career?
9. How, if at all, did your age at graduation from college impact your transition?
10. How, if at all, did your choice of undergraduate institution impact your transition?
11. Tell me about the aspects of a successful transition about which you feel most confident and those about which you feel least confident.
12. Tell me about your confidence in continuing to grow in your chosen profession
13. What has been most difficult for you in the transition from college to career?

Appendix I

Demographic Characteristics of Emerging Adult Participants (N=1252)

Variable	N	%
Gender (N=1252)		
Female	879	70%
Male	373	30%
College/University Type (N=1236)		
Private	777	63%
Public	459	37%
Age at Graduation (N=1245)		
19	2	0.2%
20	17	1.4%
21	369	29.6%
22	653	52.4%
23	125	10.0%
24	51	4.1%
25	16	1.3%
26	8	0.6%
27	2	0.2%
28	1	0.1%
29	1	0.1%

Variable	N	%

Current Age (N=1250)

19	1	0.1%
20	6	0.5%
21	88	7.0%
22	245	19.6%
23	208	16.6%
24	247	19.8%
25	211	16.9%
26	185	14.8%
27	39	3.1%
28	13	1.0%
29	7	0.6%

Appendix J

Career Transition Self-Efficacy Scores – Individual Items *(N=1252)*

Item #	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	3.41	.60
2	3.45	.63
3	3.21	.75
4	3.44	.65
5	3.54	.64
6	3.71	.52
7	3.64	.56
8	3.45	.71
9	3.54	.62
10	3.72	.49
11	3.38	.70
12	3.48	.62
13	3.23	.72
14	3.46	.68
15	3.77	.46
16	3.26	.69
17	3.51	.58
18	3.45	.64

Item #	Mean	Std. Deviation
19	3.38	.68
20	3.31	.68
21	3.44	.69
22	3.38	.72
23	3.13	.83
24	3.32	.69
25	3.37	.61
26	3.59	.60
27	3.44	.72
28	3.17	.84
29	3.44	.74
30	3.19	.74
31	3.61	.56
32	3.39	.76
33	3.62	.54
34	3.57	.63
35	3.35	.67
36	2.38	.92
37	3.56	.61
38	3.45	.62

Appendix K

"Protecting Human Research Participants" Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Tammy Halstead** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 08/18/2012

Certification Number: 961846