Positive Psychology and Career Development

Michelle Aulthouse
Albert Gallatin Area School District

Jered B. Kolbert, Matthew J. Bundick, and Laura M. Crothers
Duquesne University

Abstract

The article details how school counselors can use principles of positive psychology to promote students' career development by facilitating students' pursuit of purpose and meaning. Specifically, the publication identifies how school counselors can actively employ with their students five constructs of positive psychology—namely strengths, positive emotions and flow, gratitude, perceiving and living a calling, and work/school hope—identified by Dik et al., (2014) as having empirical support for promoting career development. The authors of the manuscript provide approaches and techniques drawing on counseling theories including: cognitive therapy, solution-focused therapy, existential therapy, and positive psychotherapy, and offer actionable strategies for school counselors.

Keywords: positive psychology, purpose and meaning, school counselor, career development

Positive Psychology and Career Development

The counseling profession (Burck, Bruneua, Baker, & Ellison, 2014) and the school counseling profession (Galassi & Akos, 2007) have historically emphasized optimal functioning, in contrast to the medical model, which focuses on the amelioration of deficiencies, which currently predominates in the mental health professions (Burck et al., 2014). The distinction most frequently cited by practicing counselors regarding the difference between the counseling profession and psychology and social work is the counseling profession's emphasis on personal growth, empowerment, and wellness (Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011). Practicing counselors generally perceive psychology and social work to be more focused on pathology and a medical model (Mellin et al., 2011). In contrast, the explicit purpose of both the *ASCA National Model* (2012) and the *ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success* (2014) is to promote the growth and development of every student. Although some argue that there is an extensive literature base for counselors' use of wellness and developmental approaches (e.g., Burck et al., 2014), others have suggested that these models lack practical methods for implementation into counseling practice (e.g., McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999; Mellin et al., 2011).

The emphasis of the positive psychology (PP) movement upon strengths, positive aspects of functioning, and the importance of purpose and meaning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) represents a tradition that is comparable to the wellness and developmental models on which the counseling profession has been based. Several of the standards of the *ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors* (ASCA, 2014) are highly related to central constructs of PP, including the following standards: "Belief in development of

whole self", "Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning", and "Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals" (p. 2). Kosine, Steger, and Duncan (2008) assert that a purpose-centered career development approach is highly consistent with the *ASCA National Model's* (2014) focus on identity development, self-exploration, self-efficacy, and supporting students' pursuit of developing personal and career meaning within the context of contributing to family, society, and the greater good.

PP represents another extensive literature base that school counselors can draw upon when designing developmentally-oriented interventions, and offers potential support in the efforts of the school counseling profession to develop evidence-based approaches (Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan, & Whiston, 2008). Despite the considerable empirical basis for constructs of PP and positive psychotherapy interventions (Bolier et al., 2013), there has been a relatively minor effect upon the school counseling profession. For example, the term "positive psychology" was listed as a subject term in only four articles in *Professional School Counseling*, and there were no articles in the *Journal of School Counseling* that appeared to include a focus on positive psychology.

It is not entirely clear why positive psychology has not gained ground within the school counseling profession, but several contributing factors can be identified. Both the counselor education (Reiner, Dobmeier, & Hernandez, 2013) and school counseling professions (ASCA, 2012; Lambie & Williamson, 2004) have long struggled to develop a professional identity that is distinct from the psychology profession. Thus, any theory or principle that includes the term "psychology" may be unattractive to professionals who identify as counselors or educators. Counselors may not realize that positive

psychology represents a paradigm shift within the psychology profession, which emphasizes the exploration and development of strengths and deemphasizes pathology (Dik et al., 2014). The professional identity of school counselors is further complicated by the lack of visibility and role ambiguity within the school system (Cinotti, 2014; Johnson, 2000). Due to the school setting, some have questioned whether school counselors are educators or counselors (e.g., Lambie & Williamson, 2004). School counselors may be more likely to turn to the significant number of developmental and wellness models (Burck et al., 2014) rather than positive psychology even though, as mentioned previously, some assert that the developmental and wellness models are lacking in practical applications (McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999; Mellin et al., 2011).

Therefore, the authors of this publication propose how school counselors can actively employ with their students five constructs of positive psychology—namely strengths, positive emotions and flow, gratitude, perceiving and living a calling, and work/school hope—identified by Dik et al. (2014) as having empirical support for promoting career development. While the conceptual importance of each of these constructs toward the theoretical process of career development has been established (e.g., Dik, Byrne, & Steger, 2013; Dik et al., 2014; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Lanham, Rye, Rimsky, & Weill, 2012), the extant literature is lacking in the connection of these constructs to well-established counseling theories in which most counselors have been trained, and in the provision of more direct pragmatic guidance for how to apply these constructs to real-world school counseling settings. Consequently, this study identifies practical techniques and activities from counseling theories, including cognitive therapy, solution-focused therapy, existential therapy, and positive psychotherapy, which school

counselors can use in providing the direct services within the *ASCA National Model* (2014; e.g., individual and group counseling, individual student planning, appraisal, and classroom lessons) to promote students' growth in relation to the five aforementioned constructs from Dik et al., (2014).

Purpose and Meaning and Career Development

Steger and Dik (2010) define purpose "as people's identification of, and intention to pursue, particular highly valued, overarching life goals" (p. 133). Meaning may be defined as "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence" (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006, p. 81). Indeed, research has revealed that meaning and purpose are related to greater happiness and fewer psychological problems (e.g., Steger et al., 2006).

The importance of one's occupation has long been recognized for optimal functioning and acquiring a sense of meaning and purpose. Frank Parsons (1909), the father of vocational guidance, stressed the importance of using an intentional process in selecting a vocation that fits one's values and strengths. Within PP, and the literature on purpose and meaning, work role has been regarded as one of the main aspects of life in which people have the opportunity to express their strengths and pursue meaning and purpose (Dik & Duffy, 2012). While many regard work as a means for making money, the accumulating research suggests that many want work to satisfy a desire for meaning in a deep, existential sense. For example, individuals may wish for work to offer an opportunity to fulfill their potential, instill a sense of purpose, and provide an opportunity to contribute to society (Dik et al., 2013). Despite the growing awareness that occupational choice contributes to purpose and meaning, the role of purpose has

typically not been included in career development activities with adolescents (Kosine, Steger, & Duncan, 2008).

Kosine et al. (2008) recommend that school counselors include an exploration of purpose and meaning when conducting career development with students. They argue that exploring purpose and meaning is a strength-based approach as it increases students' awareness of their positive characteristics. In addition, Galassi and Akos (2007) suggest that school counselors who use a strengths-based philosophy are proactive in facilitating students' development and assets. A purpose-centered approach to career development coincides with strengths-based counseling in that both approaches assist students in exploring and understanding their strengths and values.

Principles of Positive Psychology

We recommend that school counselors help students explore purpose and meaning in career exploration and decision-making, through facilitating students' acquisition of five of the six characteristics that Dik et al. (2014) identified as having considerable potential for informing interventions intended to promote a sense of meaning and purpose in career development. The five key areas of focus include: (a) strengths, (b) positive emotions and flow, (c) gratitude, (d) perceiving and living a calling, and (e) work/school hope. We excluded Dik et al.'s characteristic of job crafting—which entails re-conceptualizing one's current work in more personally meaningful ways—given its lack of relevance for adolescents who have yet to enter the workforce.

We provide a brief overview of these five constructs within PP, identify empirical support for these principles, and identify how school counselors can utilize these

concepts in conducting career counseling and development in a manner that also promotes a student's pursuit of meaning and purpose within the framework of the ASCA National Model (2012). For each of the five constructs, school counselors can inform students of the research regarding their relationship with aspects of career development. For example, school counselors can share with students that using one's signature strengths in one's job is more likely to result in a person perceiving his or her work to be meaningful (Seligman, 2002). Also, school counselors should use reflection activities for each of these five constructs. For example, school counselors can encourage students to consider under what conditions they have experienced flow, and explore what such experiences may indicate about the type of career they are likely to find meaningful and fulfilling.

Strengths

Learning about one's strengths and talents is crucial in developing deeper meaningfulness in identifying and pursuing an occupation. Using one's talents and strengths at work is associated with greater meaning (Seligman, 2002), perceiving one's job to be a calling (Seligman, 2002), and wellbeing (Proctor et al., 2011; Proyer, Ruch, & Buschor, 2013; Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Positive psychotherapy (PPT), a counseling approach grounded within PP, places considerable emphasis upon helping consumers to identify and enhance their strengths as means to address their presenting issues (Rashid & Seligman, 2014). Positive psychotherapists, such as Rashid and Seligman (2014), question the prevailing approach in psychotherapy, which is to remediate clients' weaknesses. In contrast to

the predominant approach, which defines health as the absence of symptoms, PPT seeks to help clients nurture their strengths in order to grow and achieve wellbeing. PPT focuses on what are referred to as "character strengths" (e.g., kindness, teamwork; see Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths differ from talents and abilities in that they have moral features that are not always overlapping talents and abilities (Rashid & Seligman, 2014). In their work with clients and persons who seek growth-enhancing opportunities, positive psychotherapeutic therapists seek to promote consumers' signature strengths, which are defined as "authentic strengths that an individual self-consciously owns and celebrates, thinking this is the real me, the individual feels excited while displaying these signature strengths, learns quickly as they are practiced, feels more invigorated than exhausted when using them, and creates and pursues projects that revolve around them" (Rashid & Seligman, 2014, p. 279).

School counselors are historically familiar with helping students identify their strengths within the context of career development activities (Kosine et al., 2008); however, PPT offers additional ways in which school counselors may promote students' self-awareness of the development of their strengths. Schools counselors may consider incorporating elements of PPT's dynamic strength-assessment (Rashid & Ostermann, 2009). First, counselees are provided with a brief description of the 24 core strengths identified in the Values in Action (VIA) classification system, categorized according to six overarching virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Next, counselees select the five strengths that they believe are most representative of their personality, in conjunction with having a friend or family member also select five strengths they see in the counselee. The counselee's initial strengths assessment can be subsequently

compared to an online self-report measure of signature strengths. Two online self-report measures of strengths that are relevant in an educational setting include the VIA Strengths Survey for Children and the Brief Strengths Test, both of which are available at no cost at https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter. Using a worksheet, counselees summarize the various perspective to obtain a score, and the top five strengths may be considered the person's signature strengths. Counselees then examine their experiences and accomplishments in which their signature strengths have been exhibited. School counselors can have students identify the implications of the results of the dynamics strengths assessment, having students consider such questions as which of the student's signature strengths does the student wish to be able to use within an employment setting, and what are careers and leisure activities the student think will offer the most opportunity to use his or her signature strengths.

School counselors can implement and coordinate programs that enable students to engage in risk-taking opportunities to explore their interests and abilities. Peer-led programs, such as peer mentoring, peer tutoring, peer mediation, and peer helping enable students to assume positions of leadership under training and supervision, thus providing students with a safe environment for personal exploration. Not only do such programs appear to benefit the students receiving assistance, but they also appear to help the students trained for the respective leadership roles. For example, Peterson and Skiba (2001) concluded from a review of the research literature that peer mediation training increased the self-esteem and academic achievement of peer mediators.

Additionally, there is empirical support for the effectiveness of a model called deliberate psychological education (DPE), which promotes the cognitive development of

helpers by providing them with support for making sense of the normative challenge to their worldview when assuming a new role-taking experience (Faubert, Locke, Sprinthall, & Howland, 1996; Mosher & Sprinthall, 1971). In the DPE model, the helper's supervisor provides support through weekly meetings and journaling activities in which the helpers reflect upon their thoughts and feelings about the role-taking experience. Through such challenge and support, helpers can develop a new, more complex understanding of themselves and others. Several studies have found that the use of the DPE model in school settings promotes the cognitive development of helpers, and also yields benefits for students. Sprinthall and Scott (1989) found that the application of DPE resulted in increased cognitive complexity and moral reasoning among female high school tutors, and increased the math achievement test scores of the elementary-aged female tutees. Faubert et al. (1996) indicated that the use of DPE increased the cognitive and ego development of rural, African-American high-school students who provided tutoring in science to same-age peers. However, the research on DPE is somewhat mixed; for example, White (2000) found that while DPE resulted in increased mathematics achievement and academic efficacy of 8th grade tutees and increased the mathematics achievement of 8th grade tutors, the intervention did not result in increased academic efficacy or cognitive development for the tutors.

School counselors have the academic training for creating a sufficiently structured environment in which students are provided training for the skills required for positions of leadership, and are both challenged and supported in the implementation of these new roles (Foster-Harrison, 1995). In addition to training students to engage in helping roles, school counselors use their counseling skills to help students explore how

these roles influence their self-concepts, self-efficacy, and their worldview, helping students identify which aspects of these new roles they find rewarding and offer potential for future careers that they might regard as meaningful.

The authors recommend that school counselors can also design classroom lessons in a manner that enables student to utilize their strengths. For some students, this may mean roles such as leading small groups of other students in discussions or activities, and for other students, it may involve organizational activities such as distributing and collecting items at the end of lessons. This approach nurtures a strengths-enhancing environment where students' individual strengths are valued and important (Dixon & Tucker, 2008).

In order to help students think about careers beyond those that they are exposed to in their community, school counselors can encourage students to explore potential interests and strengths by engaging in novel activities that may be beyond students' comfort zones. Many group counseling and/or lesson activities can be used to develop a sense of students' strengths. For example, the "M&M" activity (Darst & Drury, 2002) can be adapted to help students explore their strengths. In this activity, students are provided two different colored cups, a handful of M&Ms (more can be offered if necessary), and a list of various strengths. For the first cup, the students refer to the group roles/strengths handout, and for each role/strength they feel they have played in group, they will add those M&Ms to their cup. They can add as many or as few M&Ms as they like, depending on how often they feel they showed that strength or played that role. For the second cup, the group members again refer to the group roles/strengths handout, and they repeat the first direction in now evaluating their group members.

Once everyone has placed the M&Ms in the other group members' cups, the members compare the M&Ms they received and process the activity through such discussion questions such as: (a) Were there significant differences in your two cups? (b) What does this tell you about the difference between your self-perception and how others perceive you in this group? (c) What surprised you about how your group members perceive you? (d) What do you think can contribute to the differing viewpoints of you and the other group members? (e) Are there any M&Ms in your cup that make you feel uncomfortable or hurt your feelings? (f) Was it harder to put M&Ms in your own cup or in other members' cups? Why? (g) Before this exercise, how did you feel about the accuracy of your self-perception compared to how others perceive you? Has this changed after the activity? (h) Since this activity could not include all strengths/group roles, are there other roles or attributes that were not on the list that you would like to attribute to yourself or others? Through the processing of the activity, students will learn what strengths/group roles others think they possess.

The "Who Am I" activity (www.TeacherVision) can be adapted to assist students in exploring their strengths. In this activity, students trace themselves on a large sheet of paper. First, outside of the borders of the traced body, students identify strengths that they believe others appear to see in them. Next, within the borders of the traced body, students are to identify strengths they see in themselves. Finally, students retrace their bodies on the opposite side of the paper, and indicate within the borders of the body strengths that they may have but which others are often not aware of. This last portion of the activity often leads to rich discussion of strengths that students are thinking about but only beginning to explore and act upon.

School counselors can adapt the strength bombardment exercise for the purpose of promoting students' awareness of their signature strengths. In a group or classroom setting, students can be asked to identify signature strengths that they see in other members of the group or class, and be asked to provide examples of when they have observed the identified student demonstrating the strength. For this exercise, students should be provided the list of signature strengths used within PP.

In conducting career development activities such as administering interest inventories, career fairs, etc., it is important for school counselors to help students process how the information gained through such activities relates to their developing awareness of their strengths and interests. In follow-up classroom lessons and group activities, school counselors can ask students to consider how the information they obtained compared to their expectations, what they learned about their strengths and interests, if the experience helped them identify additional areas they want to explore, and what information and experiences they now want to pursue as result of the experience.

Positive Emotions and Flow

Positive emotions and flow are two central principles within PP that, due to their similarities, are often discussed in conjunction. While research suggests that negative memories and emotions are more likely to persist than positive memories and emotions (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), positive psychologists assert that people can learn to increase their experience of positive emotions about the past, present, and the future through intentional practice (Rashid & Seligman, 2014). Positive emotions regarding the past include contentment, fulfillment, pride, serenity, and

satisfaction. Positive emotions concerning the future include hope, optimism, faith, confidence, and trust, while positive emotions regarding the present include mindfulness and savoring (Rashild & Seligman, 2014). Learning to focus more frequently on positive emotions, which are associated with income and resilience, helps individuals to develop resilience by countering the effects of negative emotions (e.g., Fredrickson, 2009). Flow is a state in which a person is highly engaged in a goal-directed activity to the point that people lose track of time or self-consciousness (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Both positive emotions (Brief & Weiss, 2002) and flow (e.g., Fullagar & Kelloway, 2009) are positively related to several indicators of job effectiveness, including enhanced performance job satisfaction. Flow theory posits that this condition is achieved when persons are engaged in activities in which they are highly skilled and which they find challenging. Positive emotions are more likely to be achieved when employees are engaged in a positive activity that is related to their interests, skills, and values (Lyubormirsky & Layous, 2013). Seligman (2002) suggests that one way to increase flow is to identify one's signature strengths and opportunities to use them more frequently.

The importance of positive emotions and flow has a number of implications for career development. Students can be asked to identify times when they have experienced positive emotions and flow (Rashid & Seligman, 2014). School counselors may find that students who have not done much career exploration struggle to identify times when they have experienced positive emotions and flow. Thus, school counselors can make the activity a long-term assignment in which students record when they experience either positive emotions or flow in a career journal. As we have observed in

our experience as school counselors, many students are likely to identify activities that do not at first glance appear to have implications for an occupational choice. In other words, students are likely to identify such leisure activities as playing sports, spending time with friends, playing videogames, etc. For such situations, the students' career journal might include a column in which students identify an occupation that might incorporate the activity they enjoy. Students should be asked to be very explicit about the activity they enjoy, and identify the activity they enjoy in more differentiated terms. For example, students who indicate that they enjoy sports may be asked to identify what specifically they enjoy (such as the physical exertion, team camaraderie, attentional focus, etc.).

When asking students to reflect upon career development activities, such as job shadowing or volunteer experiences, school counselors should have students explicitly identify positive emotions during their experience. This verbalization is important because of the human tendency to focus on negative aspects of experiences emotions (Baumeister et al., 2001). Also, it is not uncommon for students to have considerable anxiety when thinking about the future (Lo Cascio, Guzzo, Pace, & Pace, 2013). Thus, school counselors can teach students that they have control over how they perceive events and can learn to intentionally focus upon positive aspects of experiences.

Gratitude

Gratitude, which has been defined as the thoughtful practice of being thankful and giving thanks (Emmons & McCullough, 2003), was another PP construct that Dik et al. (2014) identified as having considerable potential for informing interventions intended to promote a sense of meaning and purpose in career development. Gratitude has been

found to be negatively associated with burnout among mental health professionals

(Lanham et al., 2012), and positively associated with job satisfaction (Lanham et al.,

2012; Waters, 2012) as well as life meaning and personal accomplishment (e.g., Chan,

2010). Importantly, gratitude can be enhanced through intentional practice (Emmons &

Mishra, 2011). Dik et al. (2014) recommend that career counselors assist clients in

learning to reframe perceptions of their employment to increase gratitude. For example,

a client's statement, "I have a low paying job" can be positively reframed as "My work

still provides for my family's needs" in a manner that is likely to increase the client's

sense of meaning in work (p. 12).

School counselors can seek to enhance students' gratitude by incorporating

techniques of cognitive therapy (CT) in instructing and counseling students. Students

can be taught the essential principle of CT, which is that one's emotional state is not

dependent upon events in one's life, but rather is more related to one's perception of

such events (Beck & Weishaar, 2014). In other words, students can be helped to realize

that they have considerable power in how they perceive and interpret their career

development experiences.

When thinking about their future career, some students may exhibit such

negative or irrational thoughts as the following (Stead, Watson, & Foxcroft, 1993):

- I will never be successful.

- What is the point in even trying?

- Why think about something now when it is so far away?

- There are so many jobs to think about and I will never be able to make a choice.

- I must make the right choice.

- Important people in my life must approve of my career choice.

Students can be taught how to identify and replace such irrational thoughts. This strategy can be a difficult, abstract concept for even thinkers in the formal operational stage of cognitive development (i.e., most middle school age students) to grasp, and thus, school counselors are encouraged to reinforce this concept through concrete metaphors and repeated exposure. One of most effective concrete ways to teach the importance of rational/positive thinking is through Albert Ellis's ABCDE method (Ellis & Ellis, 2014), in which "A" stands for an activating event, "B" represents beliefs, and "C" indicates the person's emotional consequence. It can be explained to students that many people mistakenly assume that an event dictates one's emotional reaction, when in actuality, people have control of their interpretations of events. In other words, we have the capacity to develop an "attitude of gratitude", which provides us with the courage to directly confront our anxieties. By disputing (D) their beliefs, people can lessen their emotional intensity (E). Students can be encouraged to practice using this model through homework assignments in which they record their emotional and cognitive responses to daily occurrences. Other concrete activities to explain the abstract principle include the use of thought bubbles which have students identify the likely thoughts related to the emotional state of a child displayed in a picture. Or, students can be shown photographs of students engaged in a similar activity, such as interviewing for a job, with one student appearing confident, with the other student appearing anxious, and then be asked to identify the how the thoughts of the two students pictured likely differ.

Calling

Calling can be defined as a pull toward a career path that connects one with a deeper purpose in life (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Finding a calling appears to be important for many people. A large-scale study found that 44% of college students report a calling and nearly 30% indicate they are in search of a calling (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Employees from diverse occupations, including physicians, administrators, computer programmers, etc., perceive their career as a calling (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Among college students, calling has been found to be positively associated with career maturity, career-decision self-efficacy, work hope, and academic satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Within adult populations, calling has been found to be a predictor of favorable work outcomes such as job satisfaction, career commitment, and work meaning (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012).

Dik et al. (2014) assert that the process of helping a person identify his or her calling is similar to the traditional career development process of helping people understand their strengths and selecting a career that matches their strengths. They recommend that career development clients be encouraged to be strategically active in gathering information as opposed to waiting for a direct revelation concerning their calling. People often report that they found their calling after engaging in work that helped them realize their calling (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Many persons report that various occupations are compatible with their strengths, and in such situations Dik et al. (2014) recommend that the helper assist the client with determining how the respective career choices relate to his or her life goals. Clients engaged in the career development

process can be informed that most people report that helping others or contributing to society is what defines work as meaningful (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2014).

School counselors can use numerous approaches to help students explore their calling. An existential perspective can be used to teach students that most people believe that having a calling is an essential component of life, and that the process of finding a calling is somewhat unique to each person. In classroom lessons, individual and group counseling, and individual student planning, school counselors can discuss their perceptions regarding how adults pursue meaning, what types of careers, community involvement, relationships, and leisure activities that people find meaningful, and efforts they have initiated in their pursuit of meaning. Students may be assigned the task of interviewing a family member or selected adult to determine the adult's path to establishing a career they find meaningful. Students can also be asked to consider what they are passionate about, what makes them passionate about the experience, and what current and future pursuits would enable to them to continue to explore this passion.

The "Future Me" group activity can be used with early and late adolescent students in developing their picture of their future "Quality World" (Wubbolding, 2003) through the use of imagery. In this activity, individual students sitting in the first of three chairs are asked to imagine, with their eyes closed, to envision their idealized picture of what they would like the world to look like as they imagine themselves ten years in the future. During this envisioning, the students are asked, in sequence, to identify and report what they see, smell, and hear as other students in the group observe. They are subsequently asked to move to the second chair, and now undergo the same imagery

process but envisioning their Quality World five years into the future. Finally, the students are asked to sit in the third chair, which represents their current self, and asked to identify what they are doing today, in the present, to make possible their idealized visions.

The "Life Goal" activity (Beck, 2014) can be adapted to help students pursue their calling. In this activity, students envision what it would be like living a life where that goal plays a major role. If some students struggle to identify a goal which they think may play a major role in their lives, they can alternately be asked to replace a goal with a passion. Next, students need to identify their strengths which can be accomplished through employing strategies discussed under *strengths*. Following this step, students must identify what motivates them. Through individual student planning, school counselors can help students identify what motivates them through reviewing the results of career interest or strengths survey or through questioning. For example, is a student motivated by connection, security, influence, accomplishments, or enlightenment? They might be asked how their passion—boosted by strengths, fueled by motivation—is developing into a plan. Then, students are asked to think about whether their most passionate goal matches their most purposeful inner drive. For example, if a student's goal is to be the chief executive officer of a major company, but his or her purposeful motivation is quality time with family, given the very extensive time commitment to work of the typical CEO this is likely not be an appropriate goal for this student. Next, school counselors will help the students connect all previous steps to moving ahead with their goal by identifying what it is that is holding them back. The last step is to develop ideas

of how to remove those obstacles, and provide students the tools it will take to act on the goal.

The activities suggested promote students' awareness of their signature strengths and ideas for identifying potential callings will typically help students identify further areas for exploration. School counselors, either in classroom lessons, individual or group counseling, or individual student planning, can increase the likelihood of students' transfer of learning by helping them to identify how they can continue such self-exploration. School counselors can ask students to identify what additional information or experiences do they want; what are some extracurricular, volunteer activities, job shadowing, or informational interviewing opportunities that would help them explore a potential strength/calling; whom might they involve in that process; how they might approach such persons, etc.

Work/School Hope

Work hope can be defined as "a positive motivational state that is directed at work and work-related goals and is composed of the presence of work-related goals and both the agency and pathways for achieving those goals" (Juntunen & Wettersten, 2006, p. 13). Work hope has been linked to increasing students' sense of calling and academic satisfaction (Duffy, Allan, & Dik, 2011), self-esteem and decision making (Yakushko & Sokolova, 2010), and achievement-related beliefs with high school students enrolled in a work-based learning program (Kenny, Walsh-Blair, Blustein, Bempechat, & Seltzer, 2010). When applying this construct to school-based career development, it can be viewed as related to assisting students in both finding meaning and purpose in school activities and developing the self-efficacy for addressing

academic challenges. An important component work/school hope involves learning the importance of being intentional and active in developing an optimistic and realistic perspective, and school counselors can use the activities for teaching students about how to think rationally and positively that were described under gratitude.

One counseling theory that has implications for instilling school hope and gratitude is solution-focused theory (SFT). PP and SFT both emphasize strengths. SFT assumes that people are growth oriented and possess the resources to achieve their goals (Murphy, 2008). School counselors can use several solution-focused techniques in classroom lessons and individual and group counseling to increase students' school hope. Students can be asked to rate their current sense of hope on a 10-point scale. Next, the school counselor can help students explore the things that contributed to their rating, even for students who assigned a low level of school hope. In other words, the school counselor can ask students to identify what are the positive things, in terms of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which contributed to the score, be it a 3, or a 5, or a 7. This technique counters the tendency of students—particularly students at the concrete operational level of cognitive development (i.e., most elementary school age students)—to think in black-and-white terms, that they either have no hope for school, or that they have achieved their goal. Furthermore, this technique may help students develop a sense of gratitude for the things that they do have. Following an in-depth exploration of the students' resources, students can be asked to identify times in the past when their sense of hope was higher than their current level. Once again, the school counselor helps students identify those thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which students' attribute to their higher level of hope in the past. This activity often helps

students identify forgotten strengths and resources. Finally, the school counselor can have students explore future success, having the students identify what they would be doing if their level of school hope improved just one number on the 10-point rating scale. This question can help students learn that achieving a goal is about making daily efforts to make incremental progress.

There a number of career development tools available to school counselors that can also be used to promote students' hopefulness. Many of the career and college development programs, such as Bridges (https://access.bridges.com/auth/), Career Cruising (http://public.careercruising.com/en/), and Naviance (www.naviance.com/), include resume builders that enable students to list strengths and activities relevant to careers. For school districts that do not purchase online career exploration programs, free online career exploration programs are available through the College Board (www.collegeboard.org/). Exploring students' annual progress towards identifying a calling and increasing their preparation for entering the world of work or education beyond high school can counter students' tendency to be overwhelmed by the challenge, and perceive themselves in categorical terms, as either being ready or not ready, when in actuality they may be making slow and steady progress.

Student information systems may be used by school counselors to help them identify students who are at-risk for academic failure or dropping out of school. Students who are struggling academically or who exhibit chronic tardiness or absenteeism may be lacking hope and seeing school as irrelevant to their future. An important predictor of school dropping out is a long process of disengagement (Hupfield, 2007). Through the use of the principles of PP discussed throughout this manuscript, school counselors can

identify students vulnerable to disengagement earlier, and collaborate with them in order to help them perceive school as meaningful.

Future Research

Much of the empirical support for positive psychotherapy has been conducted with adults (Dik et al., 2014) and there needs to be research on the application of techniques of PPT with youth in school-based settings. Indeed, although PPT has the potential to contribute to the promotion of wellbeing in children and adolescents, there is a shortage of empirically-validated PP interventions studied in the counseling, psychological, and educational literature (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014). Although factors such as positive emotions, gratitude, hope, goal-setting, and character strengths have been found to be associated with children's and adolescents' happiness, comfort, and success, many of the interventions designed to promote these strengths have been examined through short-term efficacy studies conducted in controlled research settings, with potential limited portability to school settings (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014).

However, school is the place in which children spend most of their time, and serves as the launching experience for students' postsecondary educational and career choices and activities. It stands to reason, then, that if PP interventions are used to improve children's and adolescents' present and future wellbeing, and specifically, help to focus their career development, for pragmatic reasons these interventions can be implemented in schools. However, before we commit ever-diminishing resources such as personnel time and financial expenditures, it is essential that we better understand the potential effectiveness of the proposed interventions through committing to the research to support such efforts. Similarly, research is needed regarding the creation of

a comprehensive curriculum that integrates counseling theory techniques and positive psychotherapy for youth, as such efforts are likely to benefit all students.

Conclusion

As the authors have sought to demonstrate, PP has considerable potential for school counseling programs and in promoting students' career development. PP's emphasis on promoting strengths is consistent with the developmental and strengths-based approach that have informed the school counseling profession. These constructs of PP can be considered a holistic approach to career development that may also have implications for academic development. School counselors' efforts to promote students' awareness of their strengths and increasing students' ability to generate positive emotions, flow, gratitude, and school hope may help students realize that they have considerable control over their academic performance.

Promoting students' pursuit of calling may assist students in identifying how their current school experience is related to their future Whereas teachers typically focus on promoting students' academic achievement through direct instruction, school counselors focus on facilitate academic development through more of a holistic focus on students (Galassi & Akos, 2007). PP potentially offers school counselors a unique way of approaching students' career and academic development. Studies have found that some school counselors lack confidence in their ability to address academic achievement gaps (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010) and to positively influence students' academic achievement using their typical interventions (Brigman & Campbell, 2003). The identification of additional frameworks and interventions, such as PP, may increase school counselors' self-efficacy for promoting academic development.

       The fact that there is a strong and growing empirical base for the use of PP in career development is consistent with the efforts of the school counseling profession to develop evidence-based approaches (Carey et al., 2008). The identified suggestions for how school counselors can incorporate PP to promote career development builds upon the conceptual advances of Dik et al. (2014) by offering connections to counseling theories familiar to school counseling, and offers practical guidance for integrating these principles in the educational setting. The adoption of the techniques of PP in career development may be a further step in expanding the service delivery of school counselors to better situate students to be prepared for the world of work.

References

Allan, B. A., Autin, K. L., & Duffy, R. D. (2014). Examining social class and work

    meaning within the psychology of working framework. *Journal of Career*

    Assessment, 22, 543-561. doi:10.1177/1069072713514811

American School Counselor Association. (2012). *The ASCA National Model: A*

    framework for school counseling program (3rd ed.). Alexandra, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2014). *Mindsets & behaviors for student*

    success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student.

    Alexandria, VA: Author.

Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is

    stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology, 5*, 323-370. doi:10.1037/

    1089-2680.5.4323

Beck, A., & Weishaar, J. E. (2014). Rational emotive behavior therapy. In D. Wedding &

    R. J. Corsini (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (10th ed., pp. 231-264). Belmont,

    CA: Brooks/Cole.

Beck, M. (2014). Conjuring good magic: How to set powerful goals. *Money &*

    manifesting. Available online at http://marthabeck.com/2014/12/how-to-set-

    powerful-goals/ (accessed July 27, 2016).

Bridges. (n.d.). Available online at https://access.bridges.com/auth/. (accessed July 24,

    2016).

Brief, A. P., & Weiss, H. M. (2002). Organizational behavior: Affect in the workplace.

    Annual Review of Psychology, 53, 279-307. doi:10/1146/annurev.psych.53.

    100901.135156

Brigman, G., & Campbell, C. (2003). Helping students improve academic achievement

and school success behavior. *Professional School Counseling*, *7*, 91-98.

Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/42732521

Bodenhorn, N., Wolfe, E. W., & Airen, O. E. (2010). School counseling program choice

and self-efficacy: Relationship to achievement gap and equity. *Professional*

School Counseling, 13, 165-174. http://dx.doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2010-13.165

Bolier, L., Haverman, M., Westerhof, G. J., Riper, H., Smit, F., & Bohlmeijer, E. (2013).

Positive psychology interventions: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled

studies. *BMC Public Health, 13*, 119-139. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-13-119

Bunderson, J. S., & Thompson, J. A. (2009). The call of the wild: Zookeepers, callings,

and the double-edge sword of deeply meaningful work. *Administrative Science*

Quarterly, 54, 32-57. doi:10.2189/asqu.2009.54.1.32

Burck, A. M., Bruneau, L., Baker, L., & Ellison, (2014). Emerging counselors' perception

of wellness: Implications for counselor development. *Counseling Outcome*

Research and Evaluation, 5, 39-51. doi:10.1177/2150137813518554

Career Cruising. (n.d). Retrieved from: http://public.careercruising.com/en/

Carey, J. C., Dimmitt, C., Hatch, T. A., Lapan, R. T., & Whiston, S. C. (2008). Report of

the national panel for evidence-based school counseling: Outcome research

coding protocol and evaluation of Student Success Skills and Second Step.

Professional School Counseling, 11, 197-206.

Chan, D. (2010). Gratitude, gratitude intervention and subjective well-being among

Chinese school teachers in Hong Kong. *Educational Psychology, 30*, 139-153.

doi:10.1080/0144341090349394

Cinotti, D. (2014). Competing professional identity models in school counseling: A

historical perspective and commentary. *The Professional Counselor, 4*, 417-425.

doi:10.15241/dc.4.5.417

College Board. (n.d.). Retrieved from: www.collegeboard.org/

Darst, K. V., & Drury, A. (2002). M&M game. In J. L. DeLucia-Waack, K. H. Bridbord, &

J. S. Kleiner (Eds.), *Group work experts share their favorite activities: A guide to

choosing, planning, conducting, and processing* (pp. 35-36). Alexandria: VA

Association for Specialists in Group Work.

Dik, B. J., Byrne, Z. S., & Steger, M. F. (Eds.). (2013). *Purpose and meaning in the

workplace*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

doi:10.1037/14183-000

Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2009). Calling and vocation at work definitions and prospects

for research and practice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 37*, 424-450.

Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2012). *Make your job a calling: How the psychology of

vocation can change your life at work*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton

Press.

Dik, B., Duffy, R. D., Allan, B. A., O'Donnell, M. B., Shim, Y., & Steger, M. F. (2014).

Purpose and meaning in career development applications. *The Counseling

Psychologist, 43,* 558-585. doi:10.1177/0011000014546872

Dixon, A. L., & Tucker, C. (2008). Every student matters: Enhancing strengths-based

school counseling through the application of mattering. *Professional School

Counseling, 12*, 123-126.

Duffy, R. D., Allan, B. A., & Dik, B. J. (2011). The presence of a calling and academic

    satisfaction: Examining potential mediators. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 79*,

    74-80. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2010.11.001

Duffy, R. D., Bott, E. M., Allan, B. A., Torrey, C. L., & Bik, B. J. (2012). Perceiving a

    calling, living a calling, and job satisfaction: Testing a moderated, multiple

    mediator model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 59*, 50-59.

Duffy, R. D., & Dik, B. J. (2013). Research on calling: What have we learned and where

    are we going? *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 83*, 428-436.

Duffy, R. D., & Sedlacek, W. E. (2010). The salience of a career calling among college

    students: Exploring group differences and links to religiousness, life meaning,

    and life satisfaction. *Career Development Quarterly, 59*, 27-41.

Ellis, A., & Ellis, D. J. (2014). Rational emotive behavior therapy. In D. Wedding & R. J.

    Corsini (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (10th ed., pp. 151-191). Belmont, CA:

    Brooks/Cole.

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An

    experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life.

    Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84, 377-389.

Emmons, R. A., & Mishra, A. (2011). Why gratitude enhances well-being: What we

    know, what we need to know. In K. M. Sheldon, T. B. Kashdan, & M. F. Steger

    (Eds.), *Designing positive psychology: Taking and moving forward* (pp. 248-262).

    NY: Oxford University Press.

Faubert, M., Locke, D. C., Sprinthall, N. A., & Howland, W. H. (1996). Promoting

cognitive and ego development of African-American rural youth: A program of

deliberate education model. *Journal of Adolescence, 19*, 533-543.

Foster-Harrison, E. S. (1995). Peer helping in the elementary and middle grades: A

developmental perspective. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 30*, 94-

104.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2009). *Positivity: Discover the ratio that tips your life towards

flourishing.* New York, NY: Crown.

Fullagar, C. J., & Kelloway, E. K. (2009). "Flow" at work: An experience sampling

approach. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 82*, 595-615.

doi:10.1348/096317908X357903

Galassi, J. P., & Akos, P. (2007). *Strengths-based school counseling: Promoting

student development and achievement.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hupfield, K. (2007). A review of the literature: Resiliency skills and dropout prevention.

Retrieved from www.scholarcentric.com

Johnson, L. (2000). Promoting professional identity in an era of educational reform.

Professional School Counseling, 4, 31-40.

Juntunen, C. L., & Wettersten, K. B. (2006). Work hope: Development and initial

validation of a measure. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*, 94-106.

doi:10/1037/0022-0167.53.1.94.

Kenny, M. E., Walsh-Blair, M. E., Blustein, D. L., Bempechat, J., & Seltzer, J. (2010).

Achievement motivation among urban adolescents: Work hope, autonomy,

support, and achievement-related beliefs. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77*, 205-212. doi:10/1016/j/jvb.2010.02.005

Kosine, N. R., Steger, M. F., & Duncan, S. (2008). Purpose-centered career development: A strengths-based approach to finding meaning and purpose in careers. *Professional School Counseling, 12*, 133-136.

Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to professional school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 124-131.

Lanham, M. E., Rye, M. S., Rimsky, L. S., & Weill, S. R. (2012). How gratitude relates to burnout and job satisfaction in mental health professionals. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 34*, 341-354.

Lo Cascio, V., Guzzo, G., Pace, F., & Pace, U. (2013). Anxiety and self-esteem as mediators of the relation between family communication and indecisiveness in adolescence. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 13*, 135-149. doi:10.1007/s10775-013-9243-1

Lyubormirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22*, 57-62. doi:10/1177/ 0963721412469809

McAuliffe, G. J., & Eriksen, K. P. (1999). Toward a constructivist and developmental identity for the counseling profession: The context-phrase-stage-style model. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 77*, 267-280.

Mellin, E. A., Hunt, B., & Nichols, L. M. (2011). Counselor professional identity: Findings and implications for counseling and interprofessional collaboration. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89,* 140-147.

Mosher, R. L., & Sprinthall, N. A. (1971). Deliberate psychological education. *The Counseling Psychologist, 2*, 3-82.

Murphy, J. J. (2008). *Solution-focused counseling in schools* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2009). Flow theory and research. In S. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 195-206). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Naviance (n.d.). Naviance. Retrieved from www.naviance.com

Parsons, F. (1909). *Choosing a vocation.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook of classification.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Peterson, R. K., & Skiba, R. (2001). Creating school climates that prevent school violence. *The Social Studies, 92*, 167-175.

Proctor, C., Tsukayam, E., Wood, A. M., Maltby, J., Eades, J., & Linley, P. (2011). Strengths gym: The impact of a character strengths-based intervention on the life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 6*, 377-388. doi:10/1080/17439760.2011.594-79

Proyer, R. T., Ruch, W., & Buschor, C. (2013). Testing strengths-based interventions: A preliminary study on the effectiveness of a program targeting curiosity, gratitude,

hope, humor, and zest for life enhancing life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*, 275-292. doi:10.1007/s10902-012-9331-9

Quinlan, D., Swain, N., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2012). Character strengths interventions: Building on what we know for improved outcomes. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*, 1145-1163. doi:10.1007/s10902-011-9311-5

Rashid, T., & Ostermann, R. F. O. (2009). Strengths-based assessment in clinical practice. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session, 65*, 488-498.

Rashid, T., & Seligman, M. (2014). Positive psychotherapy. In D. Wedding & R. J. Corsini (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (10th ed., pp. 461-498). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Reiner, S. M., Dobmeier, R. A., & Hernandez, T. J. (2013). Perceived impact of professional counselor identity: An exploratory study. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 91*, 174-183.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). A*uthentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55,* 5-14.

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist, 60*, 410-421. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410

Shoshani, A., & Steinmetz, S. (2014). Positive psychology at school: A school-based intervention to promote adolescents' mental health and well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15,* 1289-1311. doi:10.1007/s10902-013-9476-1

Sprinthall, N. A., & Scott, J. A. (1989). Promoting psychological development, math achievement, and success attribution of female students through deliberate psychological education. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36*, 440-446.

Stead, G. B., Watson, M. B., & Foxcroft, C. D. (1993). The relation between career indecision and irrational beliefs among university students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 42*, 155-169. doi:10.1006/jvbe.1993.1011

Steger, M. F., & Dik, B. J. (2010). Work as meaning: Individual and organizational benefits of engaging in meaningful work. In P. A. Linley, S. Harrington, & N. Page (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work* (pp. 131-142). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*, 80-93. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.53.1.80

Waters, L. (2012). Predicting job satisfaction: Contributions of individual gratitude and institutionalized gratitude. *Psychology*, 3, 1174-1176. doi:10.4236/psych.2012. 312A173

White, P. M. (2000). *Promoting mathematics achievement, academic efficacy, and cognitive development of at-risk adolescents through deliberate psychological education*. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 61(3-A).

Wubbolding, R. (2003). Reality therapy theory. In D. Capuzzi & D. R. Gross (Eds.), *Counseling and psychotherapy: Theories and interventions* (pp. 255-282). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

www.TeacherVision.com (n.d.). Who am I? Available online at https://www.teacher

vision.com/tv/printables/orange/sl-25.pdf

Yakushko, A., & Sokolova, O. (2010). Work hope and influences of the career

development among Ukrainian college students. *Journal of Career Development,*

36, 310-323. doi:10.1177/0894845309345670

Biographical Statements

Michelle Aulthouse works in the Albert Gallatin Area School District. Jered B. Kolbert, Matthew J. Bundick and Laura M. Crothers all work at Duquesne University.

Correspondence regarding this manuscript should be directed to: Jered B. Kolbert, PhD, Duquesne University, 600 Forbes Avenue, G3B Canevin Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15282; (412) 396-4471; Fax: (412) 396-1340; E-mail: kolbertj@duq.edu