

# CAREER DECISION LEARNING EXPERIENCES: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A SCALE

Denise H. Bike

Dr. Lisa Y. Flores, Dissertation Supervisor

## ABSTRACT

Worldwide, national economies are struggling, and the youth unemployment rate (ages 16 to 24) is 19% (BLS, 2010a). Young adults struggle with career decisions, often halting the process or making inaccurate or ineffective decisions (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996). With a psychometrically sound instrument based on established theory, psychologists and vocational specialists can support today's youth through research and interventions. The present study consisted of the development and examination of the factor structure of the Career Decision Learning Experiences scale (CDLE) based on Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory and on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). A 5-factor model was hypothesized based on the learning experiences proposed by Bandura and included in SCCT (social persuasion, vicarious learning, mastery experiences, negative emotional arousal, and positive emotional arousal). Positive emotional arousal is the author's innovation, based on Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotion, which posits that positive emotion contributes uniquely to experiences, beyond negative emotion (or its absence).

Analyses on alternate forms of the 125-item CDLE included exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a sample of 464 college students and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with an independent sample of 465 college students. Additionally, 291 of the students participated in a retest. The hypothesized 5-factor structure was supported by multiple criteria in EFA and a final 40-item, 5-factor solution was confirmed by CFA. Internal consistency estimates of the CDLE and its scales were high, and two- to four-week test-retest reliability scores were strong. Positive emotional arousal resulted in a unique factor. Additionally, social persuasion emerged as the most influential factor. Future research and clinical directions are discussed.