

WOMEN IN TRANSITION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER COUNSELING

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ABSTRACT

This thesis paper begins with an in-depth literature review that analyzes the career counseling process with two specific populations: women who are transitioning from welfare-reliance to self-sufficiency, and women who are transitioning out of relationships that are characterized by intimate partner violence (IPV). The analysis includes a historical look at theories that have influenced the creation of models and best practices used in the career counseling field today, and highlights popular and effective techniques that can be used in community-based and private practices. The paper highlights the importance that laws, legislations, children, resources and support systems have on a woman's ability to successfully transition out of a negative life scenario into a more positive one. The paper culminates with a resource guide designed to provide quick, concise, and applicable support to career counselors working with the two above-mentioned populations. This guide is presented in a user-friendly A thru Z format.

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INTRODUCTION

Women face many challenges when transitioning in the work world of the 21st century. Although significant gains have been made, long-standing barriers, such as lower pay for equal work, pressure to limit time off for child rearing, and sexual harassment still remain in the work world today. A study done in 1999 indicated that full-time working women still only earned 70% of the average salary of men (Matlin, 2004 as cited in Coogan & Chen, 2007). Disturbingly, sexual harassment still goes widely unreported. A study done by Fitzgerald & Rounds (1994) indicated that 50% of women who filed sexual harassment reports were fired, and 25% of those who filed were pressured into resignations or job re-assignment (as cited in Coogan & Chen, 2007).

In addition to the above-mentioned barriers, women still take on the majority of household chores and maintenance tasks, and far more women than men are single-parents. The majority of women play many life roles, and often forget about their own needs and wants. Sadly, many women have no role models to aspire to be like. In a study of 204 women, 31% of women indicated they did not know anyone who worked in their most-hoped for occupation (Robinson, Davis, & Meara, 2003). The effects of a client's gender should be considered when entering the career counseling process because of the unique ways that our society perceives and responds to the gender construct. This literature review will explore the unique supports and resources women need when undergoing career transitions. Specific attention will be given to the following two populations: women transitioning from welfare into self-sufficiency, and women leaving scenarios of intimate partner violence (from this point forward referred to as IPV), and finding new careers or re-entering the world of work after many years of unemployment.

Welfare-reliance will be defined as an inability to provide oneself and any dependents with the basic necessities for survival. These necessities include: shelter, food, clothing, child care, and medical care. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as a romantic relationship that is characterized by one or more of the following traumas: physical, sexual, mental, or emotional violence.

This paper is designed to analyze two groups of women who are in a state of transition. The word transition refers to a state of awareness, and some form of attempt to bring about change. Women in transition have become aware that they face negative challenges and barriers, and they have begun to attempt to move from their present situation into a more positive one. Although this literature review is organized in a way that discusses women of domestic abuse and women on welfare in separate categories, as many as 65% of individuals on welfare have experienced IPV (Colten & Allard, 1997 as cited in McDonald, 2002). It is crucial to note the overlapping nature of these two populations.

These two groups of women have been chosen as the focus for this paper because of the unique concerns that they present in the counseling process. Many women on welfare and in IPV scenarios have children, and thus their desires, values, and goals in the career field are often driven from a survival mode. For most women who are welfare-reliant, the primary purpose of a job is to provide stability and resources for family members; self-actualization, pride, and fun come secondary in a list of what a woman wants to achieve through her career. Similarly, a woman living in a controlling and manipulative environment defined by violence, may see a job as the sole way to financially support herself, so that she can move away from her abuser. When

career counselors work with women in these groups, they need to be ready for the complex hierarchy of needs that their clients present.

Many women in these sub groups have enhanced fear and anxiety about obtaining and maintaining a career, and many do not currently have the skill sets and education needed to achieve the job they desire. Women living in poverty may be less likely to have supportive family members and role models to show them how to achieve their career goals and financial stability. Women living with IPV may not be accustomed to having the freedom to make choices, and thus need intensive help learning decision-making and problem-solving skills. This specific population of women needs to be focused on in the career counseling field because these women wear many hats, and perform in many life roles, and thus are complex clients. Career counselors working with women in transition should prepare themselves through continued education and training. A history of societal and cultural oppression against women, the demands of child rearing, limited experience in work away from home, and a lack of self-efficacy and assertiveness are all specific concerns that career counselors need to be prepared to face when working with women in transition. To help their clients combat these barriers, a career counselor should be familiar with laws, legislation, and resources in their communities.

The focus of career counselors should be to use women's natural characteristics and strengths to create interventions that will directly impact their lives in a positive way, without disrupting their various life roles as parent, daughter, care giver, spouse, or friend. This paper begins by reviewing the theories that have formed the back bone of career counseling, and explaining how these theories have influenced the growth of models that are used today in career counseling with women. It continues by pin pointing specific techniques that have been proven

to work with women in transition, with an emphasis on the benefits of group counseling and support groups. The paper provides a practical overview of the laws and legislation that control welfare resources in America; when working with women in welfare it is imperative for the career counselor to be familiar with the stipulations and rules that govern the distribution of financial resources. The paper continues on to discuss three areas of specific concern for women in transition: education and training, money and budgeting, and child-rearing. After addressing these concerns, the paper provides an extensive list of resources available to the client and the helping professional.

This paper is unique because it provides a resource guide as an appendix to the traditional paper format. This A thru Z user-friendly resource guide would be beneficial for any helping professional who works with women in transition. The guide utilizes an informal tone and format; pages are organized into bullets and lists to make the information easy to access and share with clients. In addition, topics are presented in logical, alphabetized topics. For example, letter A introduces a section on advocacy, and letter K introduces a section on children/kids. A helping professional could keep this resource guide near their desk, and quickly look up a topic that is indexed by a logically alphabetized heading.

Overall, the paper provides in-depth analysis of relevant research, and practical implications and applications for career counselors.

THEORIES AND MODELS

It is easier to understand the models that are utilized in the world of 21st century career counseling when these models are put into the context of historical career counseling theories. By understanding the historical practices that made up the basis of career counseling for decades, career counselors can better appreciate and adhere to the holistic, developmental, ecological, and constructivist models that are widely accepted and encouraged in the field today. Career counseling practices were originally based on theories developed by male western Europeans. Traditional career counseling had a three step approach: intake interview, administration of a test battery, and test interpretation. This traditional form of career counseling bred four major faulty assumptions (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2005). First, an assumption was that work is the primary/central role in a person's life. In career counseling with women, this is often not true. For different women, factors such as spouses, children, parents, or friends can be the primary focus for their life. Another faulty assumption in career counseling is that individualism is lauded and preferred. This is simply not true for all people. In the Asian and African American cultures, a sense of belonging to a collectivist group is more important than individual success.

The third faulty assumption is the belief that career paths are ordered and sequential. A career counselor who works with women will quickly find that women may leave education for marriage and then return to education, or they may leave a career to raise children, and then return to the world of work in an entirely different career once their children have grown. The last faulty assumption is the belief that any individual, if he or she works hard enough, can realize his or her dreams. Career counselors must be aware of the glass ceiling, and help their

clients set realistic goals. Indeed, “the oppressive nature of pervasive poverty becomes the salient influence on career development” (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, p. 292) for many women. Women living in poverty simply may not have the time or money to pursue certain careers.

These faulty assumptions need to be removed from the career counseling field. In addition to avoiding assumptions, researchers Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons (2011) are strongly opposed to the use of rational theories and models in career counseling with women. Examples of these theories include cognitive therapy without behavioral components, or rational-emotive behavioral therapy (REBT). These researchers believe that rational theories, rooted in logical, systemic, and objective processes, fail to acknowledge all of a woman's options and incorrectly assess the probability of career events in her life. They argue that context, meaning, emotion, and personal growth and change are ignored in rational theories, and thus the client's potential growth through the counseling process is stunted.

Career Counseling Theories

Before analyzing the most popular and reputable models used in career counseling today, a historical look at the career counseling theories that inspired these models should be done. In order to review important career counseling theories, it is necessary to first acknowledge differentiation between a counseling theory, model, and technique. A theory is a system of ideas, developed over time and based in observation and experimentation. The counseling theory attempts to explain human thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, and is used to guide and create models. Counseling models are the practical application of theories to real-life scenarios that effect counseling clients. Models typically include steps, stages, or other processes. Models use

techniques, which are specific tasks in the counseling field that allow the client to experience growth and change.

Any historical analysis of career counseling should begin with John Holland's Occupational Themes and Codes. Holland is considered a pioneer in the career counseling field, and has tirelessly worked to better his theory over the past 40 years. His theory was introduced in the late 1950's, and is based in a systematic approach to matching a person with a specific career type (Chauvin, Miller, & Eaton, 2011; Feller, Honaker, Zagzebksi, 2001). Holland believed people sought out careers that matched their personality, and thus, people working in similar careers will have similar personalities. He believed congruence between a person's personality and his or her work environment was absolutely necessary in order for that person to experience vocational satisfaction. Within Holland's theory, careers and personalities are grouped into six major themes: realistic (R), investigative (I), art (A), social (S), entrepreneurial (E), and conventional (C). Each person has a three letter code that lists their top three themes in descending order of compatibility and preference. This code is found by utilizing the Holland's typology assessment. This theory has endured over 30 years of empirical critique, and continues to have validity and reliability (Chauvin, Miller, & Easten, 2011).

In addition to the work of Holland, the work of Donald Super has greatly influenced career counseling. Super's theory is developmental in nature, and takes a life-span, life-space approach to career development. Super suggests that career is a multi-faceted concept that includes many roles. He defines nine major life roles: child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner (Super, 1980). These roles are played out in four theaters: home, community, church, and work place. Following Super's approach, career does not

simply begin and end with the work place and co-workers. Instead, the workplace blends together with other theaters, and career because dynamic. One woman may play multiple roles in multiple theaters at one time. For example, one female may simultaneously play the roles of daughter, sister, parent, spouse, citizen, and worker. Each role comes with a set of expectations that are culturally defined. It is important to note that these roles are not rigid; the expectations for a role may change over a person's life span (Super 1980). All roles will interact and affect performance in other roles. Those, it is important for career counselors to be holistic practitioners who consider all components of a client's life, when helping them make positive life decisions and changes.

Super created a life-career rainbow to graphically represent an individual's nine life-roles. The client selects one color to represent every life role that she currently plays. The width of the color bands in the rainbow represent the importance of that life role at specific points in the client's life span. The depth of the color in a color band can symbolize a person's emotional involvement in a particular role at a particular time. For example, if a female client uses the color blue to symbolize her role as leisurite, light blue may represent a time period when she had very little leisure time, and navy blue may represent a period in her life when she was very involved in leisure activities. Lastly, the rainbow can have circles on it, which symbolize important decision-making points in the client's life (Super, 1980). For females on welfare, decision-making points may be moments when jobs were procured or lost, and for women survivors of IPV, a circle may symbolize the moment when she left her abusive partner. For many women, the birth of a child will appear on the rainbow as a pivotal decision-making point.

The life-career rainbow is a great graphic for clients who are visual workers. This theory provides a symbol, the rainbow, which allows clients to participate in genuine self-reflection. A career counselor may utilize a woman's rainbow in many consecutive therapy sessions, as it can provide a starting point for discussion, problem-solving, decision-making, and goal setting. This theory is particularly helpful when working with clients who are seeking holistic wellness and balance in their lives. The career counselor can help the client work towards balanced bands in their rainbow. Indeed, the role of leisurite is just as important as that of parent or worker.

Although many women in transition place time and money constraints, and may feel that the role of leisurite is not within their reach, the career counselor can help the client brainstorm sporadic or free leisure activities. The counselor can also help the client conceptualize a transferable skill set that can be bridged from one life role to another (Super, 1980). Perhaps skills that have been refined in the homemaker life role can be transferred and used successfully in the worker role.

This paper is designed to analyze women in transition, and thus it crucial to acknowledge the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise developed by sociologist Linda Gottfredson. Her career theory emphasized sex and gender differences, which have profound effects on the careers and work opportunities of women. The theory of circumscription and compromise explores the origins of individual and group differences in career development. Gottfredson's theory combines the theories of Holland and Super (both previously discussed in this paper), and expands upon them in a look at social inequities, particularly the inequities imposed by the gender construct. Her theory is developmental in nature, and views career development as the primary way in which a person can develop her social self (Gottfredson, 1981). This theory is brutally honest, and proposes that people have distinct concerns about the prestige level of their

jobs. The theory emphasizes the more public components of self (socio-economic status, race, and gender), and does not delve as deeply into the personal aspects of self (values, personality traits).

Gottfredson's career theory is a wonderful theory to utilize when working with women because women face many layers of stereotyping and discrimination in the work force. Their social persona can dramatically affect their job search, job retention, and job satisfaction. Women, arguably more so than men, need to be continually aware of the public components of their self. They may feel pressure to be viewed as a good mother, friend, spouse, and employee, all at the same time. This can be exhausting, and create high levels of anxiety.

In order to understand Gottfredson's theory, three terms must be understood: zone of acceptable alternatives, circumscription, and compromise. First, the zone of acceptable alternatives is a list of all jobs that a client would be willing to do if they cannot do their dream job (Gottfredson, 1981). Career counselors can help female clients explore their zone of acceptable alternatives, and make it an appropriate size. Many women in transition have zones that are unrealistically small and limiting, because they have not had the opportunity to job shadow or explore careers that may be suitable for them. A female client who envisions herself as a pediatrician and only a pediatrician, may need help creating a list of acceptable alternatives, which could include a registered nurse, a physician assistant, veterinarian, or other helping professional in the medical field. On the other hand, many women in transition, particularly those who have lived in an abusive home, may be willing to work just about any job in order to survive. Their zone of acceptable alternatives may need to be focused and limited as they gain self confidence and learn to seek out their career interests.

Circumscription is the narrowing of the zone of acceptable alternatives, which begins as early as early elementary school (Gottfredson, 1981). She believes racial and gender-based stereotypes cause children to begin to eliminate careers, because they believe a component of their self makes that career somehow out of their realm of possibility. It is a career counselor's job to help the client dispel stereotypes and set challenging, yet achievable career goals.

Gottfredson's theory lays out four stages of circumspection. The first is Orientation to Size and Power, and occurs from ages three to five. In this phase, children develop simple classifications, such as big jobs versus little jobs, and real jobs and make-believe jobs. The first stage is Orientation to Sex Roles between ages six and eight. At this level, children have already begun to dichotomize jobs into good and bad, and have a desire for a job that is *visually* appropriate for their sex. By ages 9-13, children reach the Orientation to Social Valuation phase of circumspection, and have created a ceiling and a floor to their career attainments. It is disheartening to think that a young adolescent has already excluded many careers from her zone of acceptable alternatives because she perceives herself as incapable of completing the tasks in those careers. The last stage of circumspection is Orientation to Internal, Unique Self. In this phase a person now contemplates a job in reference to multiple life roles, such as spouse, parent, and caregiver. This is the only stage where the focus of career counseling is on picking acceptable career choices. The first three stages of circumspection focus on eliminating bad career choices. This phase of circumspection is where compromise can begin.

According to Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, compromise is the accommodation of life realities and external barriers in the career selection process. A person's level of education, geographical location, and the state of the economy can all effect

compromise (Gottfredson, 1981). When compromising, a person selects the job that repels them least, not the job that attracts them most. For example, a woman without a college education living in the Midwest will compromise on her dream job as a marine biologist, and may instead pursue a career as a veterinary technician.

Gottfredson's theory is particularly useful to career counselors because she suggests five specific criteria to use in the counseling process (1981). First, she recommends that a client be able to name at least one occupational alternative. Next, she states that the client and counselor should work together to ensure that the client's abilities and interests are adequate for a desired job, and to make sure that the client is satisfied with occupational alternatives. Fourth, she states that the client and counselor should work together to ensure that the client has not consciously or unconsciously restricted the realm of possible alternatives too much. Lastly, the client should be aware of obstacles and opportunities in her chosen career. The career counseling office should become a safe space for the client to deliberate job-self compatibility. The career counselor should be open-minded, and must acknowledge and respect the client's priorities in job compromise. For women, particularly those in transition, children and financial self-sufficiency will be the top priorities in job compromise. Personal pride, values, and curiosity may have to be placed on a "back burner" due to the specific components of the woman's life. A career counselor should be cautious when acting as an agent of change for a client. It is not the career counselor's job to change the client's values or dreams; instead, it is the counselor's job to be inspiring, and to promote strategic career exploration that will have positive results.

Perhaps the most influential theory on female career counseling is John Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making. This theory is empirically proven to be

effective with support groups, group counseling, and individual counseling with both genders (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001). It is such a popular theory because it involves a strong client-counselor relationship and empowers the female client. The Social Learning Theory proposes that people develop skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits, and personality traits as a direct result of happenstance life experiences, many of which are beyond people's control (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001). Essentially, we develop who we are based on the unique learning opportunities that life provides for us. This reality can be both encouraging and overwhelming to clients. Viewed one way, the theory states that a client can seek out learning opportunities in the world, and thus achieve any career goals she may have. On the other hand, a client may feel disheartened, believing that her economic, familial, and personal life circumstances do not provide opportunities to benefit from social learning (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001).

An effective career counselor works with the client to pre-arrange positive occupational learning experiences that can help expand the client's skill set and strengthen her work habits. The client should be empowered to capitalize on unexpected events, and essentially create her own luck by placing herself in positive locations and scenarios where good things are more likely to happen. When in the right place at the right time a client can learn and adapt skills that will make her successful in other life locations. Job shadows, mentorship programs, and internships, are all good places for social learning to occur. Social learning theory stresses the need for life-long learning, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances in an ever-evolving world. Thus, the goal of career counseling under the Social Learning Theory is not to help the client find the perfect job (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001). Instead, the career

counselor helps the client find satisfaction and peace within every changing jobs and careers by establishing a good set of career skills and coping strategies.

Holland, Super, Gottfredson, and Krumboltz have all played an important role in the evolution of the career counseling field. Their theories provide a foundation for the career counseling models that are in wide practice in the 21st century. So, which models are recommended when working with women in transition? The following subsections introduce effective models that can be used to work with women in transition.

Career Counseling Models and Welfare-Reliant Women

Many counselors who work with female clients stress the importance of the ecological model, based on Bronfenbrenner's 1977 ecological subsystems (as cited in Cook et al., 2005). The ecological model acknowledges the integral interrelationship between an individual and his or her environment, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. As stated by Cook, Heppner, and O'Brien, "an individual is an active agent in her lifelong career development, but she is strongly influenced by factors outside of her choosing" (2005, p. 175). A counselor's goal in ecological career counseling theory is to help shape optimal personal-environmental interactions. Before utilizing interventions, the career counselor must carefully evaluate the best place, time, and degree of interventions.

Ecological counseling essentially lays out three options for the client: change the environment, learn to better cope with the environment, change cognitive processes within the environment (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). Usually a combination of all three of these interventions can be used. However, the career counselor must carefully evaluate the multiple systems the client lives within before taking action.

Locke and Gibbons (2008) recommend a narrative approach to career counseling. This approach to counseling acknowledges the multiple facets of a woman's life. It also acknowledges that, before addressing career issues, counselors must first address large changes in women's social relationships and monthly budget when re-entering the work force after a spouse dies or a divorce occurs. When a spouse is lost, a woman forms a new identity, and a counseling professional can help with this process. The narrative model allows individuals to construct their own reality, and this reformation of identity and reality works best when the career counselor and client work collaboratively. Locke and Gibbons (2008) advise against the counselor playing the role of an expert whose job is to shed knowledge on the situation. Indeed, a welfare-reliant woman becomes empowered when she realizes that she is the expert on her own life story and has the ultimate authority in writing and re-writing that story.

Narrative counseling is rooted in constructivism, a counseling model that follows the following five tenets: there is more than one reality, each life tells a story, each person creates her own life based on interpretation of events, relationships are vitally important, and continual reflection is necessary for growth (Locke & Gibbons, 2008; Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005). Narrative career counseling focuses on life themes, reflecting on themes of the past and how they relate to future career choices. There are three phases to narrative career counseling. The first is co-construction in which the counselor and client work together to uncover the client's life story and identify life roles. In the second phase, deconstruction, the life story is opened up and examined from multiple viewpoints in order to find deviations from the life themes, imagine possible selves, and discover preferred ways of living. The final phase, construction, allows the

client to create a future career story. This is a co-authoring process, as the counselor helps the client write their story and rebuild their life with new realities.

There are multiple benefits to the narrative approach. One benefit to narrative therapy is that it appeals to all ages, races, and genders (Locke & Gibbons, 2008; Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). In addition, the narrative approach empowers the client to be in charge of his or her life, and incorporates multiple contexts, including historical, societal, and career contexts (Locke & Gibbons, 2008; Cook & Heppner, & O'Brien, 2005). While narrative therapy has many benefits, it is limited by its lack of empirical research, and thus validity. Narrative therapy is abstract and subjective, and it does not utilize formal assessment tools, which can make it difficult to defend for reimbursements and governmental programs.

As can be seen, the models that are most effective with women place an emphasis on multiple life roles and the influences of environment. Women in transition benefit from exposure to models that encourage self-reflection, empowering the woman to write her own story and create her own career meaning.

Career Counseling Models and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

One of the most widely utilized career counseling models is the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) model, which is based on the social cognitive theory of Bandura (Morris, Schoffner, & Newsome, 2009; Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons, 2011; Herr & Ibrahim, 1987). Chronister & McWhirter (2003) and Morris et al. (2009) are supporters of the use of SCCT with IPV survivors and women presently working on leaving their abusive relationships. They adhere to SCCT because it addresses multiple contexts of a woman's life, and acknowledges the importance of a woman's thoughts. If a woman's self talk and career concept are negative, no

matter what opportunities arise for her, she will be unable to see those opportunities in a positive light. Women who experience IPV are particularly susceptible to negative self-talk, as they have been living with a controlling and violent partner who may have infiltrated their minds with self-defeating thoughts. Thus, the SCCT model encourages the counselor to first improve the client's thoughts, and then began to work on the behavioral and social components of career counseling.

The SCCT counseling model proposes that three variables are most influential in forming career: self-efficacy expectations, outcome expectations, and personal goals. Additionally, this theory acknowledges the perceived barriers and supports in the environment that interact to influence the woman's self-efficacy expectations, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

Women who experience IPV may have few opportunities to develop self-efficacy (belief in one's abilities), and the SCCT model can help expose women to self-efficacy building scenarios. First, an IPV survivor's exposure to positive role models may be severely limited by a controlling partner. Even if a women does have career or social opportunities available to her, many victims of IPV suffer from severe fear, anxiety, nervousness and depression, and may be unable to take advantage of those opportunities. Abusers limit a woman's chance to experience self-efficacy through success at work or in education. Due to deficiencies in her career environment, the woman's career self-efficacy will be low. Low self-efficacy will limit a woman's opportunities to find satisfying and well-paying jobs (Coogan & Chen, 2007). A career counselor can be instrumental in helping a female client increase her self-efficacy by reframing the way she perceives her strengths and skill sets. The skills she uses at home can be reframed as transferable skills; role plays can help a woman brainstorm how her skills developed in the abusive relationship can become positive skills in the world of work (Morris et al., 2009). For

example, anticipating a partner's emotional outbursts, and staying safe in dangerous situations, can be reframed as the ability to monitor and perceive others' behaviors, strengths in negotiation, and social perceptiveness. Seeing oneself in a more positive light will lead to increased self-efficacy.

Outcome expectations are simply a woman's believe or disbelief that life situations will work out positively for her. Many women who are in violent relationships have not had a chance to excel in education (McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010), and thus may cultivate a negative self-fulfilling prophecy in their brain that they can never excel in education. Reframing a woman's negative outcome expectations into positive ones can be life-changing. For example, guided imagery can help a woman see herself successfully completing a challenge. The counselor can be instrumental in helping the female client realize that there are often multiple choices in outcome expectations. One useful activity is to have a client identify two careers she may be interested in based on her strengths and skills. Then the client can make a pros and cons list for the two careers, and choose the career she is most interested in pursuing (Morris et al., 2009). Thus, the woman is empowered, realizing that she has options and the freedom to choose the path that is most appealing to her. A card sort can have a similar effect, allowing the woman to make evaluations of careers and categorize them into those she is interested, those she is not interested in, and those for which she needs more information.

Finally, the career counselor plays a pivotal role in helping women of abusive relationships make concrete goals. Goals are an extremely important aspect of SCCT. Chronister and McWhirter (2003) identified three major influences on goal formation: approximation to a role model, learning experiences, and demographics, such as SES, gender, and ethnicity. The

demographics of gender and ethnicity are beyond a woman's control, yet they can unfairly determine the amount of education a woman can receive, the amount of money she is paid for her job, and the type of harassment and stereotyping she endures in her chosen career. In addition, socio-economic status may prevent an intelligent woman from pursuing a costly post-secondary degree, or buying the materials to open a business or learn a new skill. Career counselors can help their female clients see beyond the barriers they face when creating goals. Through goal formation, female IPV survivors begin to see that they can choose their life path, despite obstacles that may exist.

In addition to SCCT, researchers in the field suggest that career counselors utilize the Duluth model of the power and control wheel when working with women who are transitioning out of domestically-abusive relationships (Wettersten et al., 2004). This wheel contains eight spokes, each representing a behavior typical of most batterers. These behaviors include: emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing/denying/blaming, manipulating children, economic restriction, abusing male privilege, intimidation, and coercion/threats. Once women understand how their abuser is using manipulation to control their lives, they can take back the power and control. Assertiveness training and negotiation skills would be highly beneficial with women who are leaving abusive relationship because it would empower them to ask for what they need from their workplace and/or future romantic partners (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Gianakos (1999) used Salomone's 5 career-counseling phases when working with IPV victims. Gianakos did a study of 20 self-identified IPV victims. The demographics of this group are interesting: all participants were Caucasian, and all were presently enrolled in college. Only five of the participants were living in shelters, while 75% of participants were still living with

their abuser. All participants had at least one child, and 75% were unemployed, although the interpretation of this high percentage should be done under the consideration that many of the women were full-time students, and thus education was their “job”.

Salamone’s 5-career counseling phases model begin with phase one, which is defined by Understanding Self (Gianakos, 1999). This stage of the process is usually difficult for IPV victims because their self-concepts have been manipulated by a controlling and violent partner. In order to truly be successful at stage 3-5 of this career counseling process, it is critical that a woman’s self-efficacy be significantly increased. At this phase of counseling, the client is clarifying values and self-concept, and zoning in on transferable skills. The counselors primary goals at this phase are: to develop a counseling relationship based on trust, empowerment, and validation of feelings, to attack cognitive distortions of self, to provide factual and psycho-educational data on the dynamics of abuse, to highlight the women’s skills, and to get the woman into a support group.

Phase two of the model involves understanding the world of work. Due to the social isolation caused by violent partners, many IPV survivors have narrow career interests. The career counselor has an opportunity to broaden the career exploration process for women, and encourage objective career exploration. At this stage of the career counseling process, Salomone suggests that women research a minimum of five careers. Phase three involves understanding the decision-making process through the use of Krumboltz & Hamel’s 1997 DECIDES model. Decides is a seven step process as follows: Define the problem, Establish an action plan, Clarify values and goals, Identify alternatives, Discover probable outcomes, Eliminate alternatives systematically, and Start action.

Many women express high levels of fear in phase three of Salamone's model, because they fear making a career decision on their own. In order to combat this fear, work on self-efficacy and self-concept is pivotal, because individual thoughts affect individual actions, and a client's actions will become her reality. In addition to a focus on self-efficacy and self-concept, stage one of Salamone's model may need to be revisited. Phase four is the implementation of educational and vocational decisions- the action phase. This is where the planning becomes reality, and thoughts become behaviors.

Phase five is work adjustment. In this phase a woman will experience barriers and obstacles to her successful assimilation into her new career. During this phase the career counselor helps encourage the client to stay positive, and helps her make adjustments in her career behaviors in order to sustain her growth in the work world. This phase is often gone over much too quickly in the career counseling process, which can lead to client's not meeting their career goals. This statement is proven by the fact that only 40% of the women in Gianakos' (1999) study completed the five phase counseling model and obtained jobs.

The Empowerment Model is a model that can easily be combined with Salamone's Five Phases. The empowerment model includes five steps, and is beneficial to implement with women in transition because of the positive effect it can have on self-efficacy and self-esteem (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003). In this model the career counselor's role is to walk beside the female client as she journeys through the five steps towards increased self-confidence and self-efficacy. In the first step the client becomes aware of power dynamics in her life. Second, the client develops skills for gaining and maintaining control over her life. Negotiation, networking, assertion, and verbal and non-verbal communication skills may be modeled and role-played

during this step. Then, the client utilizes her newly gained skills without controlling others, and lastly, actively “pays it forward” by becoming a role model for other women who are leaving IPV.

McWhirter’s empowerment model includes 5 C’s of empowerment. The first C is collaboration. Chronister & McWhirter (2003) emphasize the important of trust between the counselor and the client. The journey towards healing and a new possible self cannot begin until rapport and trust has been established between the helper and the helpee. The second C is context. A career counselor should never forget that a women’s career should be evaluated in the context of her other life roles, including: culture, family, children, spirituality, socio-economic-status, and support networks. The third C is competence. In this strengths-based empowerment model, it is crucial that the career counselor help the female client recognize her many transferable skills, and how they can be used in a variety of careers. This step of the counseling process also includes helping the woman find appropriate training that will help her develop new skills. The fourth C is critical consciousness, and this involves the counselor leading the client through self-reflection and a “reversioning” of herself. The last C is community, because a large factor that helped women move on from IPV was a support group.

Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons (2011) recommend the Action-Affect-Cognition (AAC) model for career counseling when working with women whose current life situation changes unexpectedly and they find themselves needing to construct a new possible self. This may mean a woman who has been forced to stay at home by an abusive partner, and is now on her own for the first time and needing to make ends meet with her own income. The AAC model is simplistic, yet effective. It states that our actions, affects, and cognitions all simultaneously

influence each other. Thus, our actions affect how we behave (and vice versa), our behaviors affect our emotional state (and vice versa), and our emotional state affects our thought process (and vice versa). While the process of creating oneself anew in a new occupational role while mourning the loss of an old life can be daunting, by keeping their cognitions, affects, and behaviors aligned and positive, women can develop and maintain their new possible selves through self-regulation. Clients can self-regulate their attitudes by building certainty in themselves through positive self-talk. Positive emotions gained through positive self-talk lead to more productive decision-making (Murtagh et al., 2011). In the beginning, the career counselor may need to help the client make positive self-statements, but hopefully the client will eventually be able make positive self-statements independently.

The SCCT, Salamone's 5 Phase, Wheel of Power and Control, Empowerment, and AAC models have fundamental commonalities. All of these effective models emphasize the need for women to first build their self-efficacy and create a positive self-definition before they can begin to search for meaningful jobs and careers. In addition, these phases are process and stage orientated; they utilize stages that can occur simultaneously, and are repeated and revisited many times over the woman's life span. These theories are particularly effective with women in transition, because they take into account the multiple roles that women play, particularly the roles of spouse and parent, when engaging in career counseling. These models acknowledge that women are multi-faceted, and a woman's career is not an isolated component of herself. All other component of the woman's life will affect her priorities and decision-making in the career field.

TECHNIQUES

While some career counselors may ascribe to a particular theoretical orientation or prefer to utilize specific models, all career counselors benefit from having an awareness of and training in a wide variety of techniques in order to meet the needs of individual and unique clients. The following section of this paper briefly discusses multiple techniques that are helpful to utilize when engaging in career counseling with women in transition.

Career Counseling Techniques and Welfare-Reliant Women

The interventions that career counselors can employ with women transitioning from welfare dependency to self-sufficiency are vast. However, before utilizing specific techniques, it is necessary for career counselors to build rapport and trust with the female client, while building a base knowledge of her current life circumstances. First and foremost, it is beneficial for the counselor to complete an intake interview to determine the client's developmental level and to assess for any mental illnesses that may hinder the career search (McDonald, 2002). Next, it is important for the career counselor to assist the female client in evaluating career and job training options, and then creating a career plan. For many it may seem to be common sense, but often times women living in poverty need to be taught that career advancement most often begins with entry-level work, and then the individual advances through a series of promotions (McDonald, 2002). Women who have limited experience in the work force may expect to achieve a certain job immediately, and thus become defeated when they find themselves not qualified for that particular job.

When helping women on welfare conduct a job search, it is important for the career counselor to determine the client's already existing strengths. Many welfare-reliant women in a

study done by Monroe et al. (2007) made “off-the-books cash” to support themselves and their children. The most frequently cited jobs that women did were nail styling, hair styling, babysitting, and in-home care for the elderly. These jobs could be done inside the female's home, and provided flexibility in hours, which is particularly helpful for women who have children. Career counselors can help clients identify transferable skills sets from these "off -the-books jobs", which could lead to more formal job training and certification. With formal training and certification, women will be more competitive job applicants. Essentially, these career counseling steps are a form of strengths-based counseling, in which women identify their strengths and then use them to overcome perceived and realistic barriers.

It is important to reiterate that career counselors sometimes need to help their clients on a much more *practical* level, and then later in the counseling process begin to utilize deeper and more comprehensive techniques. For example, a career counselor can teach women how to advertise their services. A newspaper ad about hair styling may be very effective during prom or wedding season. While career counselors may tend to focus on cognitive restructuring, support groups, and job training, it is crucial to not forget logistical items. Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to job interviews is the lack of appropriate clothing attire. Many women need \$100-200 to buy a nice suit for a job interview, and simply do not have this disposable income (Monroe et al., 2007). In addition, a person may not have money for the bus line or to buy a used car, and thus not be able to get to work on time, or at all. Career counselors may sometimes need to step out of their traditional counseling activities to connect their clients to volunteer agencies and community resources that cover the basics. Essentially, a career counselor who follows a holistic approach, will know that they need to meet a vast array of needs.

Listed below are multiple techniques that have been successful when working with women in transition. These techniques represent some of the best practices in the field of career counseling today.

Action plan. Career counselors can help clients create an action plan. An action plan is different than a goal because, in addition to setting a goal, the action plan requires the client to establish a systematic approach to achieving that goal (Borgen & Maglio, 2007). In order for a client to create a strong action plan, she needs to learn about positive uncertainty: recognizing that the future is unknown, while maintaining an optimistic attitude towards that future. Positive uncertainty helps increase a woman's resiliency and feeling of hope. It is important to note that, in order for an action plan to work, the plan must be driven by the client, not the counselor. Therefore, it does not matter how much acceptance of positive uncertainty the career counselor has; this acceptance must be passed on to and internalized by the welfare-reliant woman.

An action plan can take on a variety of forms, and Borgen and Maglio (2007) even suggest that it look like a map of an obstacle course. Some clients, especially those who are visual-spatial learners, may actually want to draw out their action plan to make it look like an obstacle course. One benefit of an action plan is the provision of a natural endpoint for the career counseling process, and thus a smooth termination of the counseling relationship. These technique may be especially beneficial to those clients who are more leery and skeptical of the counseling process, because instead of simply talking for X number of minutes, they leave the counseling process with a game plan and a tangible product.

Borgen and Maglio (2007) interviewed 49 people, and asked them what helped and what hindered their ability to make an action plan and stick to it. Of all the participants, 92% stated

that maintaining a confident attitude about self helped them follow their action plan. In addition, 85% of participants said psychological support through counseling helped them follow their action plan. This study highlights the importance of the counseling process. In the hindering category, 62% of participants stated that a lack of a clear goal caused them to not follow their action plan. This data makes it clear how important training in goal setting is to the career counseling process. This skill needs to be taught and re-taught multiple times over the course of the counseling relationship. A majority of participants (59%) stated that dealing with negative emotions hindered them from achieving their action plan, and 46% of participants stated that lack of education and skills caused them not to finish their action plan. This deficit in education and skills training is an area in which career counselors can be of invaluable help.

Assertiveness training. In one study of welfare-reliant women (Woodward, 2008) the majority of 10 participants stated that they disliked their welfare case managers, and had negative attitudes towards them during meetings. The women in this study needed help role-playing discussions with their welfare case-managers in which they remained, calm, professional, and assertive. Counselors can provide training in "I" statements, assertiveness, and active listening, to help make relationships between social service workers and welfare-reliant women stronger. A large component of career counseling is helping women recognize discrimination and use assertiveness to advocate for themselves, instead of resorting to using anger (Michaud, 2004). Michaud's study revealed many women who were hurt and angry because of discrimination they had received working with welfare agents. One woman stated, "He [the welfare agent] is not warm...It is as if you are asking him for money from his own pocket!...This is racism. It is so subtle that you cannot prove it. The worst is that you cannot

prove it” (p. 278). Progress towards change for this woman’s situation likely will not result from an aggressive confrontation that is emotionally-laden (Michaud, 2004). A career counselor and his or her client can role play the possible encounter between the woman and the welfare agent, so that the woman has an opportunity to practice stating her needs and frustrations in a rational way that will be more likely to yield results.

Assertiveness training would be particularly beneficial for women who are working with executive search firms (Malen & Stroh, 1998). These job-searching firms are often operated and supervised by men, and many female clients may feel uncomfortable expressing needs and wants to authority figures of the opposite sex.

Assessment tools. It is powerful to use self-report and self-administered assessments when working with women in transition. These forms of assessment provide privacy while the woman undergoes the process of reflection that can lead to enlightenment and change. Shearer and Luzzo (2009) were strong supporters of utilization of Gardner’s multiple intelligence assessment when working with women. This assessment was first introduced in 1983 when Howard Gardner published his book *Frames of Mind*, and has multiple benefits. First, the multiple intelligences assessment empowers women because it is a self-report measure. This self-report allows women privacy while they do self-exploration, and allows them to come to a conclusion about themselves on their own, because they are the ones evaluating their scores. Secondly, Gardner’s multiple intelligences help women uncover and nurture their transferable skills. They begin to expand their vocational identity, and see themselves in more well-rounded ways. Gardner’s assessment provides a table that corresponds careers with each of the intelligences (Luzzo, 2009). Many of these careers require bachelors and master’s degrees and at

first may appear to be out of the reach of some women. The career counselor can help broaden the list of sample corresponding careers provided with the assessment. For example, under the logical-mathematical intelligence, the jobs listed are: accountant, computer technology specialist, electrical engineer, and scientist. The career counselor could add jobs to this bank, such as: receptionist, surgical technician, medical records keeper. The interpersonal intelligence career bank includes: counselor, nurse, sales person, and teacher. This list could be broadened to include food service, day care provider, home hospice worker, CNA, etc.

This assessment is empowering, because every person who takes it has a dominant intelligence. The positive wording of this assessment ensures that the person taking the assessment is intelligent in at least one way. Women who have endured long-term verbal and emotional abuse may perceive themselves as smart for the first time.

In addition to the multiple intelligences assessment, Shearer and Luzzo (2009) used the MIDAS (Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales) when working with IPV survivors. MIDAS was created by Shearer in 1999 to provide career counselors with a bridge between the multiple intelligences and career counseling. This assessment is helpful because it divides up the 8 intelligences into 26 sub scales of more specific skills. It also assesses for three different intellectual styles that can be used when problem solving: Leadership, General Logic, and Innovation/Creativity. Benefits of this assessment are that it uses easy-to-understand language and provides a starting point for a rich interview between the client and counselor. The MIDAS helps create a personal, more detailed narrative of the client's intellectual life. The client gets their own MIDAS profile, sees themselves as a multi-faceted, complex, and interesting person.

In addition to providing women with empowerment and increased self-awareness, assessment tools can reveal a woman's current ability to utilize effective coping skills, and give the career counselor a base line for how serious her distress is when the helping relationship begins. In 2005, Hildebrandt and Keller did a study of 34 single mothers in low-income sections of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They used the General Well-Being schedule (GWB), a self-administered assessment with 18-items. Scores on the scale placed a woman into one of three categories: Severe distress, moderate distress, and positive well-being. 61.8% of women in Hildebrandt and Keller's study (2005) fell into severe distress category. In the United States norm group, this number is 13.5%. The difference in these numbers is alarming: 32.4% of welfare-reliant women fell into the moderately distresses category, in comparison to 15.5% of the norm group, and only 5.9% of the welfare-reliant women were categorized as positive well-being, while the norm group was 60%. This assessment data would be valuable when determining how much distress the client is in, and what her primary career counseling concerns are. For many women, traditional career counseling goals (interest inventories, job searches, resume building) may become secondary to addressing more critical needs for coping skills and personal/social concerns.

Goal setting. It is important to note that women in poverty are still driven by personal goals, and they have a strong desire to enjoy their work, just as self-sustaining women do (Michaud, 2004; Monroe, Tiller, O'Neil, & Blalock, 2008; Woodward, 2008; Zabkiewicz, 2010). This is exemplified in a quote from one study participant: "I do want to work, that is for sure, but that does not mean I am willing to do just anything" (Michaud, 2004, p. 279). It is crucial for career counselors to help women on welfare set realistic expectations for gradually obtaining

self-sufficiency. Michaud (2004) studied 19 women on work fare in Canada, and the majority of the women in the study stated their goal was to be on welfare less than a year. When he checked back with the women a year later, a majority of them were still dependent on the program. By helping women create achievable and realistic goals, they will avoid the devastation of not reaching their goals. For example, Woodward (2008) mentions that a woman who ultimately wants to be a registered nurse (RN), can first set a smaller, more manageable goal of becoming a certified nursing assistant (CNA).

It is also advisable for the career counselor to teach the client some coping strategies to use when facing disappointment (Michaud 2004). The counselor can help a woman maintain her self-efficacy and use positive self-talk to ensure herself that she is taking steps in the right directions towards positive and enduring life change, even if she does not achieve that life change as quickly as she would hope.

Life line. Locke and Gibbons (2008) used the technique of a life line in their narrative career counseling. In this technique the client draws a life line marked by chapters, which are major dates, life events. For each chapter of the life line, the counselor asks open-ended questions that help focus on people, locations, and feeling that are important to the client. By discussing these, the client is able to identify her labels that she wears. After completing the life line up to the present, the life line is extended onto another, fresh sheet of paper in order to create future-oriented goals and back-up plans. This technique provides many benefits. First and foremost, it empowers the women in transition: she has the ability to write out her own life line, seeing that she does have control over what is placed on the future portion of her life line. In addition, the life line provides a tangible discussion starter for the counselor and the client. It can

be utilized in consecutive sessions, and may reveal themes in the woman's life that would be influential in her career goals and pursuits.

This life line is a beneficial constructivist technique that allows the client to create her own meaning in the counseling process, and may increase her ability to plan and set goals, along with building her self-efficacy.

Negotiation skills. Welfare-reliant women, particularly those with children, can manage time demands from multiple systems by seeking out careers with flexible hours (Cook, Heppner & O'Brien, 2002). Women who work night shifts can spend the evenings with their children and sleep while children are at school. However, in order to secure flexible hours, women may need to negotiate with their employers, which can be a daunting and intimidating task. The career counselor can model negotiating skills for things such as maternity leave, salary, and flexible job hours. Just because a job traditionally is done at certain hours and holds certain responsibilities, does not mean that those traditions cannot change.

Cook, Heppner and O'Brien (2002) note that women often limit their career aspirations. They may perceive institutional barriers, and thus work in jobs that underutilize their talents. Or they may see no way around career advancement costs, such as the hefty price of college tuition or the set up costs for business inventory. Women need help learning to negotiate around their perceived barriers. A career counselor can help bring forth a perceptual change in the client's mind, which allows them to see any situation as temporary and negotiable.

Possible selves. Career counselors can help clients develop multiple occupational possible selves. An occupational possible self is a woman's vision of the job roles that she could potentially serve in. A career counselor can help the female client expand her occupational

possible self, to see herself successfully overcoming barriers and challenges to reap rewards in that specific job or career. These possible selves help the client remain future-oriented and not dwell on the negatives of their past or present situation (Malen & Stroh, 1998). It is best for the possible self to be very concrete. The more concrete it is, the more motivating and engaging it is. Counselors need to help the client understand that her possible selves will evolve and change many times throughout their developmental lifespan, and that this change is a healthy and normal process. Robinson, Davis, and Meara (2003) suggest that feared selves, instead of possible selves, receive more of a focus in career counseling for women who have a hard time setting goals or envisioning their possible selves. Often times, it is overwhelming for a woman to think about what her perfect career would be. Instead, it may be easier to use deductive reasoning and start narrowing the job search by crossing off jobs that they would not like to do, also known as their feared selves. Interestingly, nearly 10% of the women could not come up with even one feared self (Robinson, Davis, & Meara, 2003). This may be due to the fact that women living in poverty have to do many unglamorous jobs for survival, and simply do not see an occupation that they would fear because jobs equal money and stability.

The career counselor can help set up mentorships and job shadows so that women can be empowered by other women who are working in their ideal jobs and living out their desired possible self.

Validation of feelings. It is important for the career counselor to first help the welfare-reliant woman identify and acknowledge her wide array of feeling, and then validate and normalize those feelings. It is particularly important for career counselors to screen for symptoms of depression in women on welfare. Zabkiewicz (2009) conducted a study with

women to analyze the connection between employment and mental health. The study took data from a four year longitudinal study on welfare clients in California: 1,510 people from a database did initial interviews, and 718 were re-interviewed on a yearly basis. The survey is impressive and notable because it had a mortality rate of less than two percent. In this large sample, only 10% of the people were employed, and the average age of the welfare recipient was 29. Over 20% of the women in this study reported symptoms of depression, and the odds of depression were 27% less for employed women than for unemployed women (Zabkiewicz, 2009). This study provides evidence that welfare-reliant women are particularly susceptible to depression, and a career counselor would benefit from taking a holistic approach to the counseling process, discussing the mental illness as well as career components.

One limitation of this study was that it defined mental health according to the presence or absence of depression symptoms, and neglected to consider anxiety, anger, phobias, or PTSD. It is important to note that welfare-reliant women are at an increased risk for many mental health disturbances, not just depression. Shame is an emotion that is frequently mentioned by welfare-reliant women, and shame can be a contributor to feelings of depression. Shame was the most commonly cited emotion that women in the Canadian work fare program felt (Michaud 2004), and it is not surprising that this emotion is mentioned in studies with women from all sorts of cultural backgrounds (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2005; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003; Koert, Borgen, & Amundson, 2001) . In order to help the client move out of this shame and towards self-efficacy, the counselor can remain strengths-based in their counseling approach. By helping the woman focus on her positive attributes, she may begin to let go of shame.

Wellness wheel/wellness model. Health is a concern for women in the welfare system. Although physical health may not be directly tied to career counseling, if a career counselor is taking a developmental and holistic approach to career, then all forms of wellness should be addressed. The career counselor can help the female client conceptualize wellness as a holistic system of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness (Monroe et al., 2007). The woman may begin to realize that if she is not physically healthy, she will not be mentally or emotionally healthy, and thus her parent and career skills may be negatively diminished. The career counselor can teach a client to use brainstorming in order to create a list of possible coping options that allow the wellness wheel to stay intact.

Women on welfare can and will find many creative ways to go without in order to make ends meet and meet the needs of their children. Sadly, one overused coping mechanism for women trying to secure better-paying careers is deprivation (Monroe et al., 2007). In order to feed the children, a woman may only eat one or no meals a day. Nutritional deficiencies cause decreased cognitive functioning, which would have negative effects on receiving job training or performing well in a job interview. The career counselor must encourage the client to use safe coping mechanisms, while following a basic wellness model. In addition to food deprivation, many women will go without antibiotics or other medications. In a survey done by Bloom (2009), women were asked if they were “bothered by an illness, body disorder, pains, or fears about health” and 76.5% of the welfare-reliant women in the study stated that they were bothered and had health concerns. In addition, half of the 34 participants indicated symptoms of depression, and 88.2% of the participants indicated symptoms of anxiety (Bloom 2009). Women need to be encouraged to take care of their bodies just as much as they take care of their minds.

Career Counseling Techniques and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Women who emerge from IPV will need help from the career counselor in order to complete a “normal” work day without significant interruptions based in fear and anxiety. It is undeniable that domestic violence negatively affects a woman’s career. A study by Browne, Salomon, & Bassuk (1999) indicates that women who leave a domestically abusive relationship that lasted for at least one year are only 33% as likely as women in nonviolent relationships to maintain stable employment for six months (as cited in Wettersten, et. al, 2004). Seven of the 10 women in Wettersten et. al’s study (2004) reported that they had been harassed by their partners while they were working, either by the partner’s physical visits to the place of employment, or more commonly, through harassing phone calls. Clearly, verbally abuses messages during the work day would make it difficult for anyone to concentrate on his or her job tasks. Seven of 10 women also reported being distracted while at work because of anticipatory fear of the violence they would experience when they returned home. It may be difficult for an IPV survivor to define a “normal” work week, and the career counselor may utilize many role plays to help the client distinguish between normal and abnormal occurrences at work.

Listed below are a variety of techniques that a career counselor may find helpful when working with a woman survivor of IPV.

Assessment tools. The trauma of IPV can cause a woman to have dysfunctional attachments to relationships and careers, and thus van Ecke (2007) advocates for the use of attachment style assessment tools when working with survivors of IPV. An assessment tool can help the client and career counselor identify these dysfunctional thoughts, so that they can be dispelled, and new, more positive and productive thoughts can be nurtured. There are three

attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious. In a secure attachment style, a person feels comfortable exploring within their career and life, but knows when to seek care and guidance. This style values relationships more than work, but doesn't let relationships interfere with their work. An avoidant attachment style indicated that a person deactivates anxiety by relying on themselves and sometimes becoming socially isolated. This style uses work to avoid social interaction. The anxious attachment style maximizes the number of opportunities they have to get attention, because they are insecure about their partner's availability and responsiveness. This style allows relationships to interfere with the amount of time and effort put into their work.

Van Ecke (2007) utilized the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R), developed in 2000 by Fraley, Waller, and Brennan, to determine a study participants' attachment style. The Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI), developed in 1996 by Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, and Saunders, was utilized to assess dysfunctional career thoughts. The Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) is a 48 point self-report scale divided out into three subscales of dysfunctional thoughts: decision-making confusion, commitment anxiety, and external conflict. After the two assessments were taken, van Ecke looked at how the participants' attachment style correlated with their dysfunctional career thoughts.

Van Ecke's (2007) study results revealed that secure attachment style was linked to a lower number of dysfunctional career thoughts. With regards to avoidant attachment style and anxiety attachment style, the avoidant style was linked to much larger numbers of dysfunctional career thoughts than anxiety attachment style in two of the three sub categories, decision-making confusion and external conflict. When working with a client who has an avoidant style, career counselors should be aware that these individuals may give too much meaning to work. If

working with a female victim of IPV, it would make sense that she would place her identity and life meaning in her work, as she likely does not have supportive relationships at home to invest in. Counselors working with avoidant style clients should teach relaxation techniques and time management skills.

Interestingly, the women in this study had significantly more dysfunctional career thoughts than men did (van Ecke, 2007). On a 48-point scale, men had an average score of 24.9 dysfunctional thoughts; women had 34.1. This data provides evidence that career counselors benefit from additional training and preparation for helping women.

Career clusters. It is important that career counselors provide their female clients with exposure to all 14 career clusters. The 14 career clusters are traditionally used in a high school setting to expose adolescents to clusters of related occupations; however, the clusters are easily adaptable to working with any population. All careers are divided into the following 14 clusters: Agriculture, Arts and Humanities, Business and Marketing, Communications, Construction, Education, Health Sciences, Human Services, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Public Services, Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences, and Transportation (Chronister & McWhirter). Women who experience IPV have disproportional exposure to jobs in health care (nurses, pediatricians) and social services (psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health counselors, social workers, addiction counselors) because of their life situation (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003). Counselors need to dig deep through a wide array of interest and skill survey to uncover talents and skills that their client may not have even been aware that she had!

Coping mechanisms. The career counselors should have a tool box of coping mechanisms that can be taught to clients. McLeod, Hays, and Chang (2010) did a study focused

on discovering which coping mechanisms female survivors of IPV found most helpful. Women in this study mentioned the following general coping mechanisms: writing in a journal, reading empowering books written by survivors, listening to music, getting massages, and getting haircuts. While these coping mechanisms are beneficial, it is also helpful for the career counselor to provide the client with more counseling-based coping tools. These may include: self-talk, "I" statements, breathing exercises, gradual relaxation techniques, and narrative and art therapy techniques. One reality for any counselor is the need to deter women from negative coping mechanisms. Sadly, the women in this study also mentioned using the following coping mechanisms: cutting and self-mutilation, not eating to lose weight, and negative self-talk to justify why their partner treated them poorly.

Goal setting. Chronister and McWhirter (2003) emphasize the importance of career counselors helping survivors of IPV make long-term employment goals and focuses. Traditionally, the types of employment goals made by battered women are short-term in nature, because the women are functioning in fight or flight mode. Focusing on short-term goals ignores the developmental nature of career in the life-span, and thwarts women's educational interests.

Motivators for change ("deal breakers"). Frustratingly, it takes many women multiple attempts at leaving an abusive relationship before they leave permanently. A counselor can help women by providing them opportunities to identify their motivators for change. What are their "deal breakers" and "last straws"? By identifying the bottom line, a more honest and reflective dialogue can occur between the counselor and the client. The benefits of leaving the IPV may begin to outweigh the costs of leaving the IPV. Chang (2010) implemented a qualitative study with 61 total participants. The majority of the participants came from focus groups that provided

group counseling at centers, and 20 participants were interviewed individually. Through the interview process five major motivators to leave abusive relationships emerged from the female study participants.

The number one motivator to leave a violent partner was the desire to protect children. The secondary motivator was increased severity of abuse or feelings of disempowerment and humiliation with abuse (Chang et al., 2010). One woman revealed that the violence in her romantic partnership had escalated to brutal raping in the bathtub, so that running water was used to muffle the sounds of violence. At this point she realized that things had gone too far, and the dangers of staying outweighed the benefits of staying. The third motivator for leaving an IPV scenario was increased support and awareness of options. One interviewee mentioned that patrons at a local bar she and her partner visited would defend her when her husband would verbally assault her in public. She realized that although these people were not family members, they did care for her and were a surrogate family of support. Women who found out about IPV advocacy groups and were introduced to a victim advocate at a hospital or police station, felt safer and more ready to leave their abusive relationship. The majority of women in this study indicated that simple validating words from social workers, nurses, and physicians gave them the support they needed to move away from partner violence.

The fourth motivator women cited for changing their relationship with their partner was emotional fatigue, and the realization that the abusive partner was not going to change. Multiple women mentioned loss of hope and the inability to stop crying as indicators to themselves that they deserved better (Chang et al., 2010). Some women mentioned that their partner stopped promising to get help after each violent incidence. When the promise to get help stopped, for

some women the willingness to stay in the relationship stopped as well. If the counselor knows ahead of time that a partner's decreased willingness to change is a "deal breaker" for the female client, the number of verbal commitments to change can be charted, and can serve as a starting point for leaving the IPV situation. The fifth and final motivator for change was a partner's infidelity. If a woman's romantic partner was caught in a romantic relationship with another person, the desire to remain in the relationship dramatically decreased for the majority of women (Chang et al., 2010). Interestingly, the women's emotional pain from the fidelity was not the primary reason cited for leaving the relationships; it was their perceived fear of the harm that the infidelity would cause their children that caused them to leave.

Chang et al (2010) concluded through this study that two scenarios lead to change for women who are survivors of IPV: an external shift in environment or an internal realization. It is important for counselors to note that they can play a crucial role in bringing about an internal realization. This internal change does require a dramatic shift in perception, which can come about through the power of talk therapy.

Role playing. Women leaving IPV have high levels of anxiety in a plethora of areas, and perhaps the greatest of these areas is the job interview. Role playing job interviews is crucial. Women may have anxiety about job interviews because they have not had many in the past, are afraid they will be asked personal questions, or will have to explain gaps in their employment (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003). During job interview role plays many skills can be highlighted, including: good eye contact, a firm hand shake, confident posture, and asking appropriate questions at the end of the interview to express interest in the job. In addition, a classic interview question is to ask a potential employer what her perceived weaknesses are. For this type of

question, it is beneficial for the woman to state her weakness, and then show how it can be turned into a strength. During a role play, the career counselor may help the female client brainstorm possible answers to this difficult question, and other difficult questions that commonly are asked in interviews. In addition to brainstorming answers to difficult questions, a role play can also help the female client practice setting appropriate boundaries with her employer. Many IPV survivors have feelings of shame, embarrassment, and depression related to their abuse, and will choose to not discuss it with even close family members, and would definitely not want to discuss it with a possible employer. In a role play, the client could learn appropriate ways to respectfully decline to reveal certain information to an employer.

Self talk. Women transitioning out of domestic violence need help creating positive self-messages. Women who have been abused often have low self-esteem and suffer from depression, making them unable to see themselves in a positive light. Eight of the 10 participants in Wettersten et al.'s study (2004) had some symptoms of depression when they took the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II). One participant had mild symptoms of depression, 4 had moderate symptoms of depression, and 3 had severe symptoms of depression. Symptoms of depression can be reduced when a client has prescribed mantras and self-supportive statements to reiterate to herself during difficult moments.

Reducing feelings of depression is a critical component of career counseling because depression has negative effects on the career decision-making process. Lucas, Skokowski, and Ancis did a study on 18 undergraduate female students who reported simultaneous symptoms of depression and career decision-making difficulties (2000). Twelve of the 18 women (67%) believed their difficulties in career decision-making and depression were caused by low self-

esteem, and 14 of the 18 women (78%) believed their depression and anxiety of career decision-making was caused by lacking leadership skills. Training in positive self-talk could help these women increase their career decision-making confidence.

Self talk helps in many areas, not just combating depression. Self talk can actually help women practice talking kindly to the people around them, including difficult co-workers and supervisors. In a study done by Wettersten et al. (2004) one woman stated that, while she had at one time been a people person, after experiencing IPV, she felt that she no longer knew how to talk to people. Perhaps the most important person an IPV survivor needs to learn how to talk nicely to is herself. A negative internal dialogue is purposeless and self-destructive. The damaging effects of IPV emotional and verbal abuse can reach down a woman's core and steal parts of her personality. Lowered self-concept leaves many women in abusive relationships unable to identify their strengths. In Wettersten et al.'s study (2004) most of the women struggled to identify one internal personal strength. Nine out of 10 of the women identified support from friends, family, and community resources as the biggest strength they possessed. External support is *not* a personal strength. Sadly, these women can only see strength in those around them, and struggle to see inner strength or potential. Self-talk in the form of daily affirmations that are positive and self-accepting can help to counter-act the negative thoughts a woman may have been stock-piling in her brain for years.

Transferable skills. A study by Ekstrom, Beier, Davis, and Gruenberg (1981) is over 30 years old, yet it is still highly applicable to the study of women transitioning out of IPV into self-sustainment today. Some women who seek career counseling while leaving abusive relationships have not held jobs outside the home for years. This study surveyed 131 women; 98% of them

had been “unemployed” and involved in home-making or volunteer work for at least one year, and 44% of them had been unemployed for 16-30 years. This study sought to fill in the information gap about the types of unpaid work that women were doing at home and in their communities. Through examining skills women were using in their homes, career counselors helped clients realize that unpaid work is invaluable. The women came to realize that working at home had allowed them to maintain previously learned skills and acquire new skills.

Interestingly, only one task was done consistently and frequently by all women- evaluating and purchasing food. The career counselor has the unique opportunity to help women revision the daily task of grocery shopping into a career of sales or quality control. 90% of the women surveyed had provided home-health care to their children; this task can be revisioned as a transferable skill used by a CNA or hospice worker.

The women in this study have many strengths; however, they clearly need strategies for building their self-esteem and seeing all of their positive transferable skills. Sadly, 30% of the women surveyed said they could not work in a fundraising position because they believed they were under qualified; yet 57% of them reported raising funds by phone, and 60% reported helping their children with door-to-door fundraising (Ekstrom, Beier, Davis, & Gruenberg, 1981). In addition, 44% of the women said, due to a lack of competency, they could not hold jobs that required computation or arithmetic, yet 44% were the primary book-keeper in their home.

Validation of feelings. Women need to have their experiences acknowledged. Career counselors must never forget the power of verbal affirmation, and the necessity of basic attending skills, particularly when a woman is still in crisis, or has recently removed herself from

a situation of crisis. The power of listening, nodding, and affirming cannot be undervalued. One woman reported that her mental health counselor said she had a hard story (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003). This validation of her experience was very healing. She stated, “I can’t even tell you how powerful those four words were to me” (p. 307). IPV is a taboo subject that is avoided and uncomfortable to discuss for many cultural groups. A woman facing violence may have no one to talk candidly about her experiences. Thus, the career counselor should not avoid talking about the “tough stuff”. While negative feelings certainly should be validated, it is possible for the career counselor to place a positive light on negative feelings. For example, in the Latina culture the ability to endure suffering, called Marianismo, is applauded (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Thus, the career counselor can highlight the woman’s suffering as a strength and demonstration of her resiliency. The woman can be complimented on the way that she endured the IPV, instead of pitied.

GROUP COUNSELING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

The techniques section of this paper provides many specific ways that career counselors can help female clients in transition. While these techniques are beneficial in an individual counseling setting, many of these counseling techniques are also beneficial to use in a group counseling setting.

The importance of support groups and group counseling for women was stressed in multiple articles (Bloom, 2009; Chronister & McWhirter, 2006; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006; McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010; Monroe, Tiller, O'Neil, & Blalock, 2007; Quimby & DeSantis, 2006; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000) . Group members can offer encouragement and positive reinforcement that will increase a woman's self-efficacy, allowing her to perform successfully at her job and giving her the support she needs to make difficult changes. In addition, groups allow women to learn vicariously through their peers, hearing success stories and learning what coping strategies work, while simultaneously empathizing with women who are facing multiple barriers and struggling (McDonald, 2002 & Mahlen & Stroh, 1998). In the study done by Sullivan and Mahalik (2000), 61 women were divided into a treatment group (31 participants) and a control group (30 participants). The treatment group was divided into smaller groups, with six or seven women in each therapy group. These groups met for six sessions, while members of the control group did not meet in small groups at all. The Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSES) was used to measure career self-efficacy, and the Commitment to Career Choices Scale (CCCS) was used to measure vocational exploration and commitment. Women who had the opportunity to participate in group counseling had higher self-efficacy than 87% of women who did not participate in group counseling. The women of the treatment group also had higher

levels of vocational exploration and commitment than 70% of those in the control group (Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000). It is important to note that six weeks after the original study, 29 of the 31 treatment group members were re-evaluated, and they had maintained their gains in self-efficacy and vocational commitment.

The group used didactic discussions and experiential activities to allow women to analyze their interests, values, goals, and abilities, research information about possible careers, form future goals, and increase their self-efficacy. Women did not have to face these daunting tasks alone; they had the support of other people who were going through the same thing as them. The career counselor should take on a facilitator role in group counseling, allowing the women to form their own goals and direction for the counseling process. Career counselors can teach anxiety management techniques, and self-talk, which can help clients silence self-defeating thoughts that lead to low self-esteem (Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000). A crucial way that career counselors help women is to connect them to practical skills, such as networking, resume writing, interviewing, and job searching. Often times multiple community resources are available to help women in transition, but they go underutilized because they are not well advertised.

The benefits of role models in female career counseling cannot be over-emphasized. Role models are beneficial for two primary reasons. First, if a female sees a successful role model in a specific career that she had previously thought women (more specifically, herself) could not be successful in, that female is more likely to pursue that career and believe she will be successful in that career (Quimby & DeSantis, 2006). Secondly, role models increase a client's self-efficacy. Quimby and DeSantis (2006) conducted an experiment with 368 undergraduate females in order to determine whether role models have a direct influence on career choice, beyond and

exclusive from their well-known influence on self-efficacy. Holland's 6 typologies were used to look at the influence of role models in specific career fields. Results showed that self-efficacy alone accounted for 16% (Realistic career type) to 39% (Artistic career choice) of variance in career choices. Role models along accounted for an additional 2% of career choice variance in the Realistic, Artistic, and Conventional career types, and an additional 4% in the Social and Enterprising career types. Thus, it is clear to see that role models in and of themselves can have a significant impact on females considering non-traditional jobs, or jobs they had once believed were beyond their reach. Interestingly, role models alone did not have any effect on career choice in the Investigative careers. One possible explanation may be that individuals who score high on the Investigative scale are naturally curious and independent thinkers, leading them to not rely on role models as heavily. Additional research needs to be done to validate this hypothesis.

Special attention needs to be paid to minority women and their involvement in support groups. Many female career-oriented support groups are subconsciously geared towards Caucasian women and their struggles in the 21st century to escape their confining role as housewives in order to work outside the home in satisfying jobs. Many minority women, particularly African American women, have ancestral history of working in abusive and slave-like conditions outside of their homes for centuries, and thus cannot relate to the majority of women in these support groups (Cook et al., 2005). Minority women would benefit from a support group that consists of other minority women. It is important to note that any woman, despite her race, socio-economic status, or other demographic qualifiers, would benefit from a support group that

discusses marginalization and discrimination, because all women face forms of discrimination based on their gender.

Group Counseling and Support Groups and Welfare-Reliant Women

A study conducted by Zabkiewicz (2009) indicate that welfare recipients who have family support experience less depression. The study defined family support as having three or more concerned family members. But what about those women who do not live close to family members or do not have positive relationships with blood-relatives? Support groups are wonderful because they provide a non-blood family to women without supportive “blood” relatives. One promising way to provide support to women on welfare is a job club. In 2008, Woodward visited six different welfare programs throughout Northern California. At one welfare-to-work office she visited there was a job club. This job club had rave reviews, and met once a week. It was mandatory, and paid for by a California county, but all women who went found it exceptionally valuable. Participants set goals at the beginning of the club, and let the other group members know what it is they want to get out of Job Club. This club essentially provided accountability partners for each woman in attendance.

Job Club was a support group focused on self-esteem building and positive self-talk. Although it did not necessarily include the nuts and bolts of actually applying for jobs (resume writing, mock interviews), it provided a place to receive encouragement, check in, remain accountable, and have progress or “leads” celebrated (Woodward, 2008). Far too often, a woman on welfare receives a lot of criticism and no praise. Job Club recognizes that every woman is doing something right.

Group Counseling and Support Groups and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Group counseling can be especially helpful to battered women who are leaving abusive relationships. These women may feel unsupported by family members and friends who, if they have not been battered, may not understand the power and control that abusers wield over their victims. In one study (McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010) a female stated she received harassing phone calls from her ex mother-in-law, stating she was a bad mother for taking away her child's father figure. For whatever reason, an unwritten societal rule still expects women to "hold out" and "keep trying" in abusive situations. Career counselors can help women to focus on the positives of their decision to gain freedom from IPV. Support groups allow IPV survivors to surround themselves with women who have successfully come out of the cycle of violence and are living more happy and healthy lives because they broke free.

Herr and Ibrahim (1987) established a ground-breaking group counseling intervention that acknowledges the interrelationship between a battered woman's home life and her vocational life. Often times, battered women do not have the freedom to select a career based on intrinsic motivations and personal interests (Morris, Shoffner, & Newsome, 2009). Instead, their decisions are based on safety, financial obligations, and family obligations to children. Herr and Ibrahim's group focused on Super's developmental life stages and their effect on women's career choices through an eight-phase model. The model was first piloted with full-time home makers who wanted to secure financial freedom through careers that would allow them to leave their abusers.

The first phase was the only phase completed in a crisis state, and thus the focus was on feelings of loss for the abusive relationship and fear that the client would not have the ability to

stay away from the abuser and the skills to obtain a good job to financially support themselves (Herr & Ibrahim, 1987). The second phase (four sessions) was intensive family involvement in which family therapy occurred; this allowed the battered woman to feel support from her children (and often times her parents) and gave the family a chance to discuss changes that would occur in the family system. The third phase (ten sessions) used guided imagery and fantasy play to allow woman to envision themselves in new careers; in addition, it provided training in effective communication skills with employers and co-workers. After this session, many women already reported increased self-confidence and self-control. The fourth phase (eight sessions) allowed the women to create realistic career plans, which required training in decision-making skills. Herr and Ibrahim (1987) stressed that the length of stage four should be personalized to the group: some groups may need more than eight sessions to create a vocational plan, while other groups may need fewer sessions. The fifth stage required clients to implement their career plan, and this was by far the most difficult stage. Self-doubts emerged, and thus stress management techniques and guided supportive self-talk were huge components in this implementation phase.

While Herr and Ibrahim's (1987) counseling group includes eight phases, the sixth and seventh phases focus on career plan analysis, critique, and resynthesis. The researchers indicated that women got restless and bored during these phases, so it was recommended that career counselors eliminate these sessions if necessary. The eighth phase of this group counseling model is inspirational and pivotal: serving as career resources. Clients who complete the group and find jobs are invited back to serve as role models for future groups. Sharing their stories boosts women's self-efficacy and allows them to give back to the counseling system.

A study by Chronister and McWhirter (2006) examined two Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) group career interventions intended to increase self-efficacy and critical consciousness of women who had recently left domestically-violent relationships. This study defines critical consciousness as a woman's empowerment to protect herself and her awareness of the negative effects domestic violence had on her life. The two programs used were referred to as Advancing Career Counseling and Employment Support (ACCESS) programs. One of the ACCESS programs was referred to as the standard program. This group intervention included the following activities: journaling assignments to discover self, job exploration activities, relaxation exercises, skill and strength identification, increased awareness of community resources, career role modeling through reading narratives, and clarification of career goals.

The second ACCESS intervention was called the standard plus program. This program included all of the interventions available in the standard program, but added a few additional interventions. In the standard plus program, participants from previous groups served as role models for women currently undergoing the program, and journaling assignments focused more intensely on the roles of support systems on helping battered women discover themselves. Clarification of career goals was augmented by group discussion and support. Also, information about domestic violence was given to the women, and career counselors supported the women in a power analysis of domestic violence experiences (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006).

Research results indicated that standard participants and standard plus participants had greater increases in self-efficacy than the control group. Participants of the standard plus program had higher critical consciousness scores at the end of the ACCESS program than the control group or the standard group. During a follow up qualitative interview with researchers,

members of the standard plus intervention program reported making more progress toward career goal achievement than members of the standard group (Chronsiter & McWhirter, 2006). Clearly, the group intervention that placed a larger emphasis on educating women about domestic violence, empowering them to remove themselves from violence, and providing more time to spend in discussion with support group members, was the group intervention that produced the most positive results. This study provides an excellent example of the success that career counselors can find when utilizing the SCCT model with women who are transitioning out of domestically abusive environments.

Some IPV survivors are hesitant to join a support group. In a study of 20 women, only 5 IPV survivors were willing to participate in a support group (Gianakos, 1999). This study stands in contrast to the many other studies in which women express interest in support groups, and positive increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy after participating in the group (Quimby & DeSantis, 2006; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000; Woodward, 2008). The five women who participated in the support group were living separately from their partners. All 15 women who did not participate in a support group were still living with their abusers. A majority of these 15 women cited a fear that they would be pressured into leaving their partner as a reason for not attending group. It is likely that these women were still stuck in the cycle of violence and not ready to leave their abusers. If a career counselor invites a client to join a group and the client declines, it is vital that the career counselor respect the client's current desires, but also not stop asking. It may take multiple invitations before a client is ready to join a support group, but the client needs to know the option is always there, and has vast benefits.

SPIRITUALITY

As previously mentioned, a career counselor can provide female clients in transition with a wealth of coping mechanisms. All though certainly not used by all women, many women use spirituality as coping mechanism when facing barriers in career transitions. A study done in the Southern United States in 2007 revealed that a primary internally-directed coping strategy for work stressors for women was to turn to a higher power (Monroe, Tiller, O'Neil, & Blalock). One women stated, "When I have nowhere to turn to make ends meet, I have a God up above...he'll handle it" (Monroe, Tiller, O'Neil, & Blalock, 2007, p. 206). It is important to note that 80% of the women in this study were African Americans, and this cultural group is known historically to have strong roots in faith. Further research should be done with a more racially diverse group to determine the validity of these findings. However, a qualitative study done by Livingston and Cummings (2009) reveals a similar emphasis on spirituality as a coping mechanism during career transitions. Nine women transitioning from college to their first jobs in the work world reported extreme feelings of fear, anxiety, and pressure to succeed. All participants in the study defined themselves as spiritual, and seven of the nine women specifically mentioned spirituality as a coping mechanism for their fear and anxiety.

Interestingly, when asked the question, "What is helpful to you during life transitions?" (Livingston & Cummings, 2009, p. 226) only three of the nine self-reported spiritual women cited spiritual activities, such as prayer and meditation, as coping mechanisms. However, when the question was rephrased to state, "Does spirituality play a role in your coping during life transitions?" (Livingston & Cummings, 2009, p. 226) seven of the nine women answered affirmatively. There is a strong implication for career counselors here: many women have coping

strategies at their disposal, yet they do not activate them. Women may need help from career counselors in order to increase awareness of their individual self-efficacy and coping strengths. Counselors can help their clients make a strengths inventory, and provide them with role-playing scenarios in which they can put their strengths to use and witness their effectiveness. These strengths can be tied to a spiritual power during the counseling session, if spirituality is something that the client deems as valuable to her personal and career growth.

LEGISLATION AND LAWS

While career can provide people with a sense of pride and purpose, it is undeniable that financial compensation is a huge factor when an individual decides what type of career to pursue, and how long and hard to work at that career. Finances should not be shied away from in the career counseling process. The career counselor benefits from working hard to develop rapport with a client so that he or she can be honest and forthcoming about financial needs, and how these financial needs influence the client's career exploration process. Women who are transitioning out of welfare into self-sufficiency will need help budgeting and being solely responsible for obtaining a large enough income to financially support herself and her dependants. In order to understand where the client is headed, the career counselor who works with a welfare-reliant woman must first know where she has come from. In order to understand the welfare-reliant woman, it is beneficial for the career counselor to understand the legislation and laws of the welfare system. Indeed, many women who have been members of the welfare system do not understand all of its rules and regulations themselves. The career counselor can help his client gain valuable information about the system in order to smoothly transition out of it.

Legislation and Laws and Welfare-Reliant Women

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) was developed with high hopes that it would be so successful that it would eliminate the need for welfare (Woodward, 2008). PRWORA replaced the welfare program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). This program had run for 60 years and was funded by both the federal and state governments. The PRWORA implemented the Temporary

Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programming, which is the welfare program currently in use in the United States (Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005).

The new TANF welfare legislation was defined by its “work first” mentality. People receiving benefits must be working in at least a part-time job. The idea was to get people jobs, so that they could work themselves out of poverty and off the welfare system. The legislation implied that it would be good for the morale and ethics of the people in the welfare system, giving them increased self-esteem because they would be required to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”. In many ways this legislation actually perpetuates the stereotype that welfare recipients are lazy, fraudulent, and lacking a strong work ethic. It seems to state that the government needs to mandate a work ethic for certain individuals. It is true that jobs have the potential to be morally uplifting. However, critics argue that it is not possible for jobs to be uplifting if they are: unstable, temporary/seasonal, night shifts, without benefits, and providing no opportunity for advancement to managerial and/or salaried positions (Bloom, 2009).

One criticized component of the TANF legislation is its eradication of welfare cash benefits (Woodward, 2008). While many items, such as groceries, diapers, and medications, can be bought with government checks and debit cards, there are some items that simply require cash. For example, day care services provided by unlicensed professionals would need to be paid for with cash.

Another problem with the current welfare system is recipients cannot count post-secondary education class hours towards the 30 hours of work they are required to complete each week in order to receive funds (Bloom, 2009). This is a concern for many single mothers who know that in order to increase their salary, they need additional education. Instead of being

forbidden, post-secondary work should be applauded and encouraged. With a college degree, women make approximately twice as much as they would with just a high school degree (US Census Bureau, 2002, as cited in Bloom, 2009). Woodward (2008) argues that it is not beneficial to force a welfare-dependent mother to give up her schooling/training and send her kids to day care just so that she can work a minimum wage job in order to still live below the poverty line.

Perhaps the most controversial component of the welfare system is its time-sensitivity. Individuals get five years of federal funding and then they must become entirely self-sufficient and hurdle the poverty line. For some people, five years simply is not enough time. A state can choose to continue welfare-funding to the women of its population after the federal funds run out; however, only 8 of 50 states continue benefits after the 5 years of federal government funding (Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009). Data indicates that the new legislation has not been working for welfare-reliant individuals. Cancian and Meyer (2000) found that over a 5-year period, only 10% of women who left welfare earned enough to live above the poverty line (as cited in Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005). Between 1996 and 2009, 250,000 people had their welfare cases closed because their 5 year time allotment ran out, not because they had reached a point of financial independence (Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009). Unfortunately, the TANF administration does not require the collection of data about people who are unsuccessful and terminated from the program (Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009). Thus, there is no data to utilize in order to make the program better.

The career counselor needs to be aware of the specifics of these laws and legislations for two purposes. First, it must be stressed that a counselor's primary concern is to meet the needs of the client in their present state. A welfare-reliant client's most immediate need may be assistance

in navigating the financial system in which she lives, in order to remove herself from that system. Meeting the most pressing survival needs *must* occur before delving into more cognitive and values-based work. Secondly, a good counselor commits to being an advocate for the client and a positive agent of change. Career counselors can lobby for changes in an ineffective social system that affects their clients.

One way to change welfare legislation would be to allow exceptions to be made on a case-by-case basis for women who are working to become welfare-independent, but simply need a little more time. Another option may be to eliminate some forms of assistance, but allow other forms to extend beyond the five year time-limit. Many women stated that food stamps and Women, Infant, Children (WIC) coupons were the most important thing that they could not do without (Monroe et al., 2007).

Woodward (2008) spent six months observing three different welfare- to- work offices. She wanted to find out how women in the welfare system perceived the welfare system and its legislation. Her work involved interviewing 10 welfare-reliant women. All 10 of them (100%) agreed with the statement that work should be required in order for a woman to receive welfare. However, some of them suggested that it be allowable for the work to be an unpaid internship (student teaching, CNA courses) or volunteer work that would help them better their careers and their earning potential long-term.

Interestingly, when asked about the five-year time limit allotted for women to receive welfare, the majority of Woodward's 10 participants agreed with this rule (2008). One woman stated, "It you can't make it in those five years, you had to have done something wrong...or something's going on that's not right" (p. 163). Multiple women believed the five-year time limit

would help stop the cycle of children of a welfare-reliant woman also being welfare-reliant once they reached adulthood. These women did not appear to feel the need to defend women on welfare, and many mentioned that there are “good” and “bad” welfare recipients. Some women openly condemned their acquaintances as being lazy and abusing the welfare system.

While this literature review is based in the American welfare system, it is beneficial for career counselors to be aware of other countries’ welfare systems. This allows career counselors to become advocates and lobbyists for other ways of doing things. This literature review clearly indicates that, just because a system has been used for a long time, does not mean it is the best or most effective system. In Ontario, Canada, a new workfare policy provides women four months to find their own job. However, if they are still unemployed at the end of those four months, they are assigned to a compulsory work position. In addition to working in a required job, women were forced to resign from volunteering positions in order to complete their compulsory work. Unlike many countries, volunteer work is a civic expectation in Canada, and the majority of Canadians are involved in at least one volunteer position (Michaud, 2004). Lastly, the new workfare policy requires businesses to accept “workfare placements” so that the government can pay people on welfare to work in volunteer positions. Unfortunately, to free up these volunteer positions for welfare recipients, other volunteers had to be displaced. This is especially difficult for elderly volunteers, who can get a sense of pride, identity, and purpose through this later-in-life work.

Michaud (2004) interviewed 19 women from Ontario who were on welfare, 18 of whom were single mothers. The majority of the women were against the work fare policy. Interestingly, the transcripts of the women’s interviews reveal that they were more upset about losing their

volunteer positions than being assigned to a compulsory job. The women in the study cited multiple reasons for volunteering, which included the following desires: to improve or share knowledge about health, violence, and education in the community, to break their social isolation and form friendships, to satisfy innate curiosity, and to provide assistance to schools that serve children, based on inspiration from their own children.

After his interviews, it became clear to Michaud (2004) that welfare recipients are interested in developing careers and are just as dedicated to careers as non-welfare recipients. Women in the work fare program stated that their welfare jobs gave them self-confidence and made them feel “normal”. They saw it as a way to give back to the system that was helping them. Even if their work was in a marginal position, the women still felt empowered by their work.

Many states are requiring welfare recipients to attend job search training 30 hours a week, which is almost a full time job (McDonald, 2002). What these agencies may fail to realize is that single mothers attempting to get off welfare need time and support to find a career that matches their skill level, is located near their home or line of transportation, and provides working hours that minimize the amount of money that needs to be spent on child care. Perhaps the job search program should be more individually tailored, to meet the needs of real and diverse women.

Legislation and Laws and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Just as it is valuable for career counselors to understand the laws and legislation of the welfare system, it is pertinent for career counselors to be aware of state level laws and federal level laws regarding criminal offenses related to IPV. Many clients who experience IPV may not be aware of their fundamental rights, and would benefit from a knowledgeable career counselor

who can share these rights with them. For example, some states provide protection programs to hide the whereabouts and identity of a woman after she leaves her abuser. These programs may provide women with a sense of relief, knowing that laws are in place to protect her, and her children if she has them, from an abusive partner. While not all states provide equal programming, it is important for career counselors to know what programs are available to their particular clients. A career counselor can also help educate a client on sexual harassment laws that protect her from romantic partners, co-workers, and employees in the work place.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

An undeniable truth is that education opens doors of opportunities for people. A woman in transition benefits from the support of a career counselor who utilizes assessments, job shadows, mentorships, and support groups to expose her to the wide array of educational opportunities available to her.

A study conducted in rural North Carolina indicates that one role a career counselor may play when working with women who lose their jobs or transition from one life scenario to another is helping them decide whether or not to pursue additional job training or immediately begin a job search (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). There is a recent research study that indicates taking some time away from the job search process after an unexpected job loss can be helpful for reducing anxiety and helping the unemployed person develop some healthy coping strategies (Gowan et al., 1999 as cited in McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). Just because a woman takes time off from the job search, does *not* mean she is not serious about pursuing educational and career goals. In one study 77% of study participants planned on receiving additional education and training after leaving an IPV shelter (Brown et al 2005). These women do need and want additional opportunities.

One benefit to taking time off from the job search is the pursuit of training in the technology or science industries, the two fastest growing sources of employment in the United States (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). Many technology and science jobs can be received through minimal training at a local community college. Many unemployed women would be great candidates for completing a short amount of training, and then applying for a related job. Due to the short length of these training programs extensive financial burden is not present, yet only 15-

20% of employees who lose their jobs unexpectedly pursue additional job training in the technology and science fields.

Half of the population in McAtee and Benshoff's study (2006) chose to pursue vocational training after losing their jobs, and half of the women chose to immediately re-enter the work world. Although it may be tempting for the career counselor to push vocational training when a woman is attempting to make herself more marketable in the career search, it is important to consider the contextual influences of the female's environment. The majority of women in this study who did not choose more education stated that their rural community did not have job opportunities in fields that required additional education- and they have a valid point. Why take more time and money to get a certification that will not produce a better job in the end?

In addition, the older the woman was, the more likely she was to select immediate re-employment over job training (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). All women cited support as the most influential of the four S's in determining whether or not they chose to return to college. The more support a woman felt from her family and friends, the more likely she was to attend college for job training (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006).

The studies mentioned in this paper indicate that a career counselor should keep an open mind when providing career counseling to women, remembering that each client is a unique individual with unique career goals and aspirations. The career counselor must also remember that there is more than one way to reach a career goal. While some women would benefit from additional skill training through educational coursework, other women may be able to reach their career goals by learning on the job through apprenticeships or entry-level work that eventually

leads to a promotion. Additional training can be time consuming and costly, and thus may simply not be an immediate option for all clients.

MONEY AND BUDGETING

Many women in transition may have limited knowledge in how to create a solid budget that includes boundaries on how much money can be spent in specific locations and at specific times. For clients living paycheck to paycheck in survival mode, saving money may be a foreign concept, and a basic skill set may need to be established in order for the client to successfully manage money. A woman who has been on welfare for an extended period of time may be so used to having the government dictate her finances, that she may be overwhelmed when this responsibility is given back to her. The finances of IPV survivors may have been controlled by an abusive partner for a long time, and thus women from IPV scenarios may also be at a loss on how to effectively manage money. The career counselor can help clients practice certain skills, including delayed gratification and effective decision-making, in order to successfully navigate financial concerns.

Money and Budgeting and Welfare-Reliant Women

It is logical that a woman who works full time will have much larger income potential than a woman who works part-time. However, multiple scenarios, such as motherhood, physical illness, or mental illness, often force women to only work part-time (Baker, 2009). In a tri-country study done in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, Baker (2009) found that women who are on welfare are significantly more likely to work in minimum wage and part time jobs than women who were not on welfare. A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that employment is only a solution to poverty when the wages earned match the cost of living, and this is simply not the case in many countries, and in many jobs available to welfare-reliant women. A majority of jobs available to women on welfare are only part-time (Baker, 2009).

Many women leaving the welfare system need training in monetary budgeting. In a 2007 study of 84 women (80% African American, 14% Caucasian, and 6% other) the most common coping strategy for paying bills while on welfare was to leave the “least important” bills unpaid and wait to see how creditors responded (Monroe et al., 2007). This strategy can lead to potentially severe legal consequences for ignoring unpaid debts, and thus the career counselor should help the client develop a more beneficial coping strategy for paying bills. Of the 84 women in this study, only a few mentioned budgeting as a means to cope with financial struggles (Monroe et al., 2007). However, the women’s budgeting was largely ineffective over the long term. One woman felt confident because, she said her family had “saved our money, put some on the side, that’ll last me from one Friday to another Friday”(Monroe et al., 2007, p. 205). This form of budgeting will not be effective long term. Career counselors can expose clients to a wide variety of free, online budgeting software that will help the client begin to budget and save money to help her transition out of welfare.

In addition to helping with the logistics of budgeting, career counselors can help females set immediate, short-term, and long-term financial goals. The setting and completing of immediate financial goals will allow the welfare-reliant women to feel financial success and increase her self-efficacy. The short-term goals will keep her on track to achieving her long terms goals, and ideally, the long-term goals will allow the women to remove herself from the welfare system completely. It may be valuable for the client to write down her financial goals and have a financial accountability partner (Bloom, 2009; Gemelli, 2008; Monroe et al., 2007). The career counselor can assist the client in developing a mentorship with a member of the community or another client through a support group.

Money and Budgeting and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

A large number of women who leave IPV will be welfare-reliant (Brown, 2005). This reality is due largely to the fact that the earning potential of IPV survivors is very low when they first leave their abusers. To prove this point, 92% of participants in an IPV study (12 of 13 women) made less than \$10,000 a year (Brown, 2005). This minimal income was due to a variety of reasons. Some women missed a lot of work because their partner controlled and manipulated them into staying home. Other women were fired from jobs because they were in emotional crisis and could not perform their job duties at an acceptable level.

Indeed, one of the largest barriers women face when attempting to leave violent relationships is the lack of funding to support themselves. Abusive partners may immediately take his partner's income and deposit it into a bank account that is off limits to the woman. Some women may receive a belittling allowance from their partner, but this money would not be nearly enough to reach self-sufficiency. Many IPV survivors have unrealistic expectations about the cost of living because their abusive partners have hidden their true income (Gianakos, 1999). Thus, in step three of Salamone's 5-step career counseling process, IPV survivors are asked to research the cost of everyday living supplies, in order to prepare for self-sufficiency. This is a simple, but important exercise that can help female clients in a practical way.

The number one reason women in one study reported for not leaving their abusive relationship was a lack of financial resources. Three of the 10 women in one study had absolutely no control over their finances; one woman stated, "he'd take my checks and take my bank card. I couldn't even hide money" (Wettersten, et al. 2004, p. 453). Four of the 10 women

were given an allowance, but were not allowed access to joint checking accounts where their pay checks were deposited as soon as they were earned.

While money is often a reason that women do not leave IPV, it is sometimes a motivating factor for them to leave (Chang et al., 2010). In an interview for Chang's study, one woman indicated that she used to hide her wallet in her children's tree house in their backyard. One day she identified this form of saving and hoarding money as humiliating and unfair, and that realization was her catalyst to leave the abusive relationship.

CHILDREN

Many women in transition place children as their top priority when making financial and career-based decisions (Gemelli, 2008; Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009; Turner, Danziger, & Seefeldt, 2006). The costs of basic necessities for survival (food, shelter, clothing, transportation) and child care can be a constant source of anxiety and stress for women who are trying to improve their life circumstances. The need to care for a child may supersede the need for additional training and education, or the development of skill sets, for many women. Indeed, the time constraints of parenting may make it difficult for a female client to even engage in the career counseling process. Career counselors will achieve the greatest success if they remain holistic, and see a woman's child as an extension of herself and parenting as one of her most valued and important life roles. Indeed parenting is one component of self that affects the woman's worker component of self (Super, 1981).

Children and Welfare-Reliant Women

Children are a huge motivator for the vast majority of welfare-reliant women. In fact, 90% of welfare recipients in 2001 were single mothers with kids (US Department of Health and Human Services as cited in Gemelli, 2008). Woodward (2008) asked welfare-reliant women how they perceived their work, and the vast majority of them saw their work as a way to ensure family security. Thus, the career counselor should seek out ways to actually include children in the counseling process if at all possible. Every woman who had children in Woodward's (2008) study on welfare-reliant women mentioned the desire to set a good example for their children by maintaining positive work. Many women wanted to get additional training because they hoped

that better job with better pay would allow them to send their children to charter schools or private schools, or save money for their children for college.

While children bring many joys to a woman's life, they can present challenges as well. Women with three or more children are at increased odds for depression. Zabkiewicz (2009) found a significant relationship between the number of months people are employed and their symptoms of depression. There was a three percent reduction in odds of depression for every months of employment completed. However, it is important to note that the decreased odds for depression did not start until the tenth month of employment. It didn't matter whether the job was part-time or full-time, it just needed to be a job that was stable. This study is telling about why women on welfare are at such a higher risk for depression. These women often work in low paying jobs that are temporary and unsteady hours. If it takes 10 months for women to feel employment stability, and they are "job jumping", they may never be able to feel employment stability.

Many families who are impoverished have limited accessibility to health care, and families on welfare are twice as likely to have a child who is disabled or severely disabled than a family that is not on welfare (Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009). If a child's disease is chronic, the parent may need more than five years of welfare support in order to remain financially stable. In a study of 500 mothers on TANF, 56% were currently unemployed because of a child's health. Many day care centers cannot provide care for a child who has significant special needs, thus the parent is forced to turn to home day care, which may not be regulated and of lower quality.

Childcare is a controversial topic for all women, not just welfare-reliant women. Many women choose to stay home with their children, especially during their first five years, before

primary school begins. Over the past three decades, there has been a trend towards women working and an increase in childcare, yet the decision to leave a child with a stranger, is a difficult one. Cook, Heppner, and O'Brien (2002) encourage counselors to advocate for child care resources. One battle that is not often discussed in literature is the need to convince many women to leave their children in child care. The counselor can help dispel any stereotypes the woman has regarding child care having negative effects on a child's intellectual and social development. Counselors can teach women ways to assess their use of child care in order to build up their reassurance in the childcare process.

While some moms prefer to stay home with their children, many women gain a source of identity and pride from their occupation, and would prefer to work, and send their child to day care. Gemelli (2008) conducted a qualitative study with 12 welfare-reliant, single mothers. The majority of women in the study stated that they appreciated their jobs and did not want to be stay-at-home parents. They believed it was healthy to have a physical, mental, and emotional break from their children, and a job offers that break. Three women in the study believed it was best for women to be stay-at-home moms, because it allows them to better monitor their children's development in their own home, especially the development of teenagers. Two women were particularly concerned that if their teenage daughters were left home alone they would get pregnant or become addicted to drugs. Thus, they were desperately trying to move from working night shifts to working in the day, so that they could provide direct parenting.

One huge barrier to childcare for welfare-reliant women is the cost. Childcare is expensive. Baker's (2009) study found that 27% of Canadian earnings, 17% of Australian earnings, and an overwhelming 42% of New Zealand earnings go to child care costs. For many

mothers, working in low-paying jobs truly is not as financially effective as staying at home to take care of children and utilize welfare benefits. Interestingly, of the three liberal welfare countries studies in Baker's research (2009), Canada had the highest percentage of employed welfare-reliant moms, and the highest poverty rates. This research indicates a confounding variable for women looking to move from welfare dependency to self-sustainment: losing child care assistance (Gemilli 2008). If a woman works more than 40 hours a week in order to get ahead and earn health benefits, she may make too much and be removed from assistance; however, without that assistance, she cannot pay for child care. One woman in Gemilli's study (2008) received \$1,100 from her state government in child care assistance, but she made less than that every month at her job. She expressed a lot of anger, saying, "The state would rather pay somebody else to watch my kids than me" (page 111).

Women who cannot afford to pay for their child care, but are required to work in order to receive welfare money, may resort to working part time and sending their child to day care part time. Indeed, the percentage of women without kids who worked part time in Baker's study (2009) was 18.7%; the percentage of women with children who worked part time was 36.6%. Anytime a woman works fewer hours, she will make a smaller income. The earning gap between 40-year-old mothers and 40-year-old childless women in Canada was 30%. Based on data, reasons for this earning gap include time off for pregnancies, new born children, and sick children, and taking lower-paying jobs to avoid commuting. Children are a huge variable in the equation for welfare-reliance, and for obvious reasons, they are a variable that simply cannot be overlooked in order for women to move from welfare-reliance to self-sufficiency. Baker's (2009) comparison of motherhood, gender, and marriage revealed that, of these three factors,

motherhood had the largest impact on earning potential. Sadly, motherhood impacted earning potential in a significantly negative way.

Even if a welfare-reliant woman can come up with the money necessary to utilize child care, a common concern among many women who worked night shifts was the ability to find child care during the middle of the night. During the night childcare must come from family or friends, as the vast majority of day care centers have traditional 7am-6pm hours of operation (Gemelli, 2008). Frustratingly, what does a woman do if she does not have a support system, and thus does not get child care from family and friends. In Gemelli's 2008 study a significant number of participants mentioned contemplating marriage, not because they were in an enjoyable romantic partnership, but because they saw marriage as a ticket out of poverty for themselves and their children. All counselors, including career counselors, can help women consider their options, and make sure their decisions are based in logical thoughts. The counselor can help the woman ask herself- Is marriage really the best answer to a lack of child care?

Many women required to work in order to receive welfare regretted that they had to work long shifts, and were unable to spend time with their children after school. One mother said, in regards to her daughter, "I always feel like I'm short-sticking her" (Gemelli, 2008, p. 109). One mom works evening shifts, and thus only sees her kindergartner in the morning. She said, "By the time you get them fed, you dress them, you have breakfast together, it's like a whole three hours a day you spend time with them...that's just not a whole lot of quality time" (p. 110).

Despite the challenges that motherhood poses, in interviews with welfare-reliant mothers, pride emerged as a dominant theme (Gemelli, 2008). The women in the study were proud of their

ability to simultaneously work and raise kids. This study is eye-opening, because it reminds career counselors to focus on the strengths of the client, and highlight their perseverance.

Children and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Women are not the sole victims of intimate partner violence- IPV affects the entire family. Counselors working with IPV survivors are encouraged to help the entire family unit, not just the female head of household. Indeed, in a study of nine IPV survivors, two specifically requested to work with a counselor who was family oriented so that they could attend counseling sessions with their children (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Change is difficult for all people, but can be especially challenging for children. Leaving a father figure and living in a new environment (shelter, family member's home, friend's home) is quite a transition for young people. Chronister and McWhirter (2003) strongly suggest that counselors help mothers create safety plans that they and their children can follow at home, work, and school. These safety plans need to be explained to children in kid-friendly language with a positive attitude. One fear that prevents many women from leaving their abusers is the fear that their abuser will be enraged, and will pursue her and her children with intent to physically harm them. Leaving an abusive home is an anxiety-riddled scenario, but a counselor can help relieve some of this anxiety by helping the family be prepared.

RESOURCES AND SERVICES

As previously discussed, research indicates that welfare-reliant women and survivors of IPV are likely to work in low-income, temporary jobs, which will cause them to lose jobs more frequently, and thus look for new jobs more frequently. Women in transition face many unique barriers and challenges when pursuing the establishment of a satisfying and secure career path. These barriers and challenges can be eliminated through the support of resources and services; however, many resources go unutilized because women are not aware that they exist (Malen & Stroh, 1998). Thus, it is imperative for the career counselor to be knowledgeable on the wide array of resources that are available to their clients, and help them access these resources.

When a client sets out on her career search, both job-seeking and support-seeking behaviors valuable (Malen & Stroh, 1998). Job-seeking behaviors may include: job fairs, apprenticeship and mentorship programs, utilization of career exploration assessment tools, assertiveness and communication skills training, and resume writing workshops. Support-seeking behaviors may include attending support groups, mentorship programs, or anxiety and stress management courses. This list of behaviors is certainly not exhaustive: there are a variety of behaviors that can positively assist women in the career exploration process. These job-seeking and support-seeking behaviors can lead to the obtainment of many valuable resources. When career counselors consider the resources and services available to their female clients, it is helpful to conceptualize the resources in two categories: personal resources and community resources (McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010).

Personal Resources

A variety of resources are available to women outside of agency and community resources. Many of these resources may not originally be viewed as resources. A career counselor can help women re-conceptualize the people and places in their lives as positive resources that can be utilized in a variety of positive ways.

Housing. Housing is the top personal resource that any individual can have, whether welfare-reliant or not. It is interesting to note that in Brown's (2005) study of 13 female IPV survivors, more women viewed housing as a means to independence than employment. All women in the study had children, and the majority of them viewed providing a safe living environment for their children as their number one priority. While they appreciated the shelter, women in the study were concerned about the stereotyping their children received from living in the shelter, and were concerned about the overall stability in their schedule. Long term, it may seem that employment would allow more independence for women than housing, because employment would allow women to purchase permanent and acceptable housing. However, most women who are transitioning from environments of IPV are not able to immediately plan long-term. Much of their goal setting appeared to be short term.

Role models. Career counselors can provide increased access to role models, especially women who are successfully balancing child-rearing and the world of work (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). Role models can be found through volunteers in community-outreach programs or through counseling groups and support groups. These role models can share their wisdom in time management, financial budgeting, positive and encouraging self-talk, and ways to avoid discrimination and stereotyping. The desire to be understood is an essential element of the

human condition, and a role model who can simply listen and emphasize with a women in transition is a priceless resource (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003).

Supportive family and friends. The most frequently mentioned personal resource was social support from women's mothers and close friends (McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010). The power of people and community simply cannot be underestimated. If a woman knows that she has people who she can call on in times of need, she may be more likely to take career-related risks and pursue her dreams.

Community Resources

Community-based organizations (CBOs). It is important for career counselors to be aware of the Community-based organizations (CBO)s in their area that can provide invaluable resources for their clients. CBOS are not-for-profit, and provide the following direct services: resume and application skills, car ownership programs, job coaching, trade skills developments, and individual counseling (Bloom, 2009).

Most CBOS have a group of board members to make executive financial and logistical decisions, and limited staff members. Thus, the bulk of CBO work is done by volunteers. Ideally, a woman would be able to receive resources from a CBO, and one day give back to the organization that helped her through volunteer work. While CBOs provide many positive benefits, critics do have concerns that CBOs represent the privatization of welfare, because a private organization receives federal and state money, and chooses how to use it to serve the welfare population (Bloom, 2009). In addition, supporters of the separation of church and state are concerned that CBOS run by a faith-based organization may be unwelcoming to certain non-religious welfare recipients, and thus prevent them from receiving the services they need.

Bloom (2009) studied Beyond Welfare, a Community Based Organization (CBO). Beyond Welfare is a welfare support program that includes weekly meetings that assist participants with the networking process. These meetings are led by a community leadership team, and the meeting focuses on three things needed to escape poverty: money, meaning, and friends. The meetings are strength-based, and they begin with women going around in a circle and sharing their “new and good” updates. Every meeting ends with “appreciations”. Each woman states one thing she appreciates about the woman sitting to her right. In addition to its strengths-based nature, Beyond Welfare also benefits many women through its listening pair activities. These listening activities allow women to express themselves in a private, free manner, ensuring that their voices are heard. Three women in the study learned to better manage their anger and express it in a healthy way, through feedback they received in the Listening pairs.

It is impossible to truly know the power of the social support that is provided by Beyond Welfare. All five women in Bloom’s study (2009) indicated that social isolation is the biggest barrier to leaving poverty. Social isolation can cause women to remain dependent on abusive romantic partners. The benefits of social support are endless, but include: help with problem-solving, praise for achievements, opportunities for reflection, access to resources, and the ability to feel a sense of belonging. Social support is pivotal in helping a woman recover from depression. In Bloom’s 2009 study, all five participants stated they were experiencing moderate to severe depression at the time that they began the Beyond Welfare program. Through the weekly meetings of Beyond Welfare, women felt their depression symptoms become less severe.

One important component of the Beyond Welfare program is the unlearning of oppression. This CBO stresses that women on welfare need to conceptualize oppression as

structural and culturally persistent, not something that they brought on themselves. Part of unlearning oppression is recognizing and eliminating internalized, negative thoughts. The habit of self-blame needs to be broken. The complex interactions between gender, class, and race need to be analyzed in reference to their effect on poverty and oppression (Bloom, 2009).

Lastly, Bloom's interviews with welfare-reliant women indicated that they knew no one who worked in the career field they were interested in, or had a college degree in the major they intended to pursue. The Beyond Welfare program provides a wealth of guest speakers that come to weekly meetings. Many college admissions counselors and financial aid officers come to offer encouragement and answer questions. If a woman is the first person in her family to graduate from high school and attend post-secondary school, she may have no one around her to help her navigate this part of her journey. A friendly and professional face can help relieve anxiety and increase a woman's self-confidence.

Law enforcement. The presence of an empathetic and respectful police officer can help victims of IPV feel protected by the system. The simple act of police escorts helping IPV survivors move their belongings from their home to a shelter can be set a precedent for the woman and their family. This law enforcer may be the first supportive person she comes in contact with after choosing to leave an environment of abuse (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002).

Mental health screening. Many female IPV survivors expressed a strong desire to receive adequate mental health screening, including an IPV screening. One major concern is the current absence of a universal screening for IPV. Interestingly, the women in this study did not report feeling stereotyped or labeled when undergoing an IPV screening; instead, they felt relief

to receive an accurate diagnosis that normalized their traumatic experiences (McLeod, Hays, & Chang, 2010).

Sexual harassment training. Women who have survived IPV often have decreased self-confidence and self-awareness. Thus, they are more vulnerable to be victims of sexual harassment in the work place, as they may be accustomed to the cycle of abuse, and may not have the resiliency skills to speak up for themselves if they are being harassed. Counselors can facilitate psycho-educational groups that teach women how to respond to sexual harassment in the work place (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). These groups could provide information on sexual harassment laws, and opportunities for role playing that includes assertive I-statements.

Transportation. Transportation is community resource that causes a plethora of challenges and lots of anxiety for many welfare-reliant women. One interviewee in Hildebrandt & Kelber's (2005) study stated, "I don't know how to use the bus [to get to] different places to apply for jobs. I don't even know how to do it. They give you a bus route, but I can't read that" (p. 509). In Brown et al.'s study (2005), 5 of the 13 women interviewed had requested transportation help from the shelter they resided in. Although it may initially seem unrelated to career counseling, an important step in having a successful career is actually getting to the location of the career (Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005). Counselors may need to use modeling and role playing to help women feel comfortable utilizing transportation, so that they can get where they need to go.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER COUNSELORS

Implications for Career Counselors and Welfare-Reliant Women

1. Advocate. Career counselors must be advocates for their clients in legal, judicial, and welfare systems! 51% of participants (Borgen & Maglio, 2007) stated that difficulty with discrimination by a system prevented them from completing their action plan to become self-sufficient. Career counselors can advocate in a variety of different venues and for a variety of different purposes. First, career counselors can advocate for increased volunteer work opportunities for welfare-reliant women. In Gemelli's 2008 study two women mentioned volunteering as a good alternative to working low wage jobs that are meaningless and stressful. These women proposed that if they were allowed to stay home while doing structured and monitored volunteer work, their children, neighborhoods, and communities would be better cared for because there would be more watchful eyes in the neighborhood during the day. This structured volunteer work could include: running an in-home day care, volunteering at a local church, hospital, soup kitchen, animal shelter, or thrift store, and maintaining parks and pools for the local parks and recreation district. With women more present in their neighborhoods, watchful eyes would keep kids safe before and after school when they are playing with their peers, which could lead to less crime and drug trafficking. Secondly, counselors can advocate for welfare-reliant women at the post-secondary level (Bloom, 2009). They can advocate that universities not raise tuition prices for certain minority populations. In addition, they can lobby for more population-specific scholarships. Many colleges only provide general "academic" scholarships. However, a scholarship specifically designed for single mothers, or simply mothers in general, would be very helpful.

2. For a variety of reasons many welfare-reliant women may be mistrusting of helping agencies, and thus it is crucial that the career counselor take time to build up trust with her female client. The career counselor may choose to play an instrumental role in keeping open communication lines between multiple government and community agencies, which may benefit the client in a variety of ways (McDonald, 2002).

3. Keep children in mind. 90% of women on welfare are single mothers. Their children effect nearly every decision that they make. Career counselors must not consider just the female client, but her dependents as well. Child poverty almost always receives more attention than general poverty, and career counselors should utilize the power of children when helping mothers receive welfare (Baker, 2009).

4. Avoid stereotypes and biases. Counselors need to be careful to avoid stereotypes or inherent biases when working with women who are welfare recipients. It is tempting to conceptualize women on welfare as minorities or young, single mothers. This is simply not the reality of many welfare-reliant women. Some women do not have young children dependent on them, but are the sole care providers for elderly parents, grandparents, or siblings (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien 2002). Some women (12%) become widowed in their lifetimes and are forced back into the world of work unexpectedly and suddenly. Some women re-enter the work world after 20-30 years of being a homemaker when going through a divorce (Locke & Gibbons, 2008). These who re-enter the world of work after a long absence most likely have outdated skills in addition to the emotional trauma of dealing with the loss of their partner. They may enter jobs that are low-paying and need assistance.

5. Using modifiers when discussing women in career counseling can help eliminate stereotypes and biases. The words many, most, and some take on an important meaning when discussing any minority group, including women (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). It is unfair for career counselors to make assumptions about female clients, because every woman is different and there is no generalizing blanket that can be laid over an entire group of people.

6. Know laws and legislation. Sometimes it may feel like a career counselor is wading through an alphabet soup, but it is helpful to know the laws that govern the type of resources your clients are receiving. Through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programming created in 1996, cash welfare benefits were eliminated, and women are now required to work at least 30 hours a week to receive welfare (Woodward, 2008). The government does not provide a definite placement for employment, so if the economy is bad, a woman may not be able to find work. After five non-continual years on welfare, a woman may no longer receive federal funding, and state-funded welfare is uncommon and limited. Knowing the limitations and challenges that legislation presents for women in transition from welfare to self-sustainment can help career counselors better advocate and lobby, and provides a realistic base from which to begin pulling resources for clients.

In addition to knowing welfare legislation, it is helpful for the career counselor to be knowledgeable about sexual harassment laws and consequences for sexual harassment. Educating a female client on these laws may help the client feel empowered and may give them strength to speak up when they are sexually harassed in the work place by a co-worker, employer, or intimate partner.

7. Stay strengths-based and positive. Many women have been unemployed or unable to maintain steady employment for many months, or even years, and there are a variety of causes for this inability to maintain employment. Female career counseling clients may feel overwhelmed by the new technologies in work fields, anxious about being able to consistently perform job duties, insecure about their talents and skills, and afraid to interview for jobs. The career counselor has the opportunity to help the client dispel irrational thoughts, beliefs, and fears, and build up their confidence with encouraging words. A plethora of role playing and modeling techniques can be used to help women stay positive. The value of focusing on a woman's transferable life skills and her positive qualities cannot be measured.

8. Use a holistic and systemic approach. It's about so much more than career. Women perform in multiple life roles (spouse, daughter, mother, friend, sister, care giver, teacher) and each of these life roles forms a complex metaphorical web that symbolizes that woman's life. A woman's ability to maintain or excel in a job is influenced by her other life roles. A talented and ethical career counselor will never merely focus on career counseling techniques. Instead, the career counselor will see each female client as a holistic being who constructs her own reality, and lives in multiple ecological systems.

Implications for Career Counselors and Intimate Partner Violence

1. Advocate. Career counselors can provide in-services and trainings for companies that have Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Many employers make referrals to their EAP for drug and/or alcohol abuse, but many would not think to make a referral for domestic abuse (Brown et al., 2005). One benefit of EAP is that the employee does not pay for resources – the employer does. Therefore, counselor should also advocate for more funds to assist employers in

increasing the availability of EAP. Career counselors can advocate that support groups and group counseling for IPV survivors be provided at their place of employment (Gianakos, 1999). This way, women are not required to find transportation and child care in order to go to counseling. The group could be scheduled into a one hour lunch break, or provided at the end of a shift, so that women only have to travel once during their day.

Career counselors can utilize an advocacy role to help repair negative interactions and pre-conceived notions amongst welfare-reliant women and law enforcement. The majority of research participants (10 of 13) in Brown's 2005 study stated their experience with law enforcement was overall negative. One woman said, "I feel they just want us dead anyway. It is one less black person that they have to deal with when they let us [the intimate partners] fight to death or go to jail." (p. 468) In addition to advocating with law enforcement, career counselors can advocate amongst universities and training centers for educational accommodations and alternative assessments for women in transition who are in school. Chronister and McWhirter (2003) found that women who are leaving abusive relationships are often in crisis, which affects their ability to focus in class, attend all class meetings, and meet many stringent deadlines that define post-secondary education. Counselors can act as a liaison between their clients and educators/university faculty, advocating for extended time on assignments and alternative assessments of course knowledge.

2. Help build a network of resources and support systems. Women transitioning out of IPV benefit from having a non-judgmental mentor. This mentor may be for career-related topics, but it is important to note that this population of women may need mentorship in areas that are not necessarily career-related. Anger management and substance abuse management were areas that

women in Brown et. al's study (2005) requested mentorship in. It is not surprising that there is a high correlation between intimate partner abuse and alcohol abuse by the violent partner.

However, it is important for counselors to note that often times drug and alcohol abuse is a struggle for the victim of partner violence as well. In the above mentioned study, 5 of 13 participants (38%) abused alcohol and drugs. All five women explained their usage as a coping mechanism.

3. Eliminate biases and stereotypes. Although many women do not leave violent romantic relationships due to financial dependence and a lack of career opportunity and education, it is important to note that this is not the reality for all survivors of IPV. In a 2004 study, Wettersten et al. conducted qualitative interviews with 10 women who were leaving in a domestic violence shelter. Interestingly, 80% of the women had high school degrees, and 60% of them had completed some college, which refutes the belief that women who are in abusive relationships are more likely to lack education than women in non-violent relationships. A study by McLeod, Hays, and Chang (2010) is a reminder that there is not a typical survivor of IPV. This qualitative study included semi-structured interviews with 5 women. Three were African American, and two were European American. Their yearly incomes ranged from less than \$20,000 to more than \$200,000. Their abusive relationships lasted from 1 year to 17 years.

4. Be aware of multi-cultural influences. It may be especially difficult for minorities to leave domestic relationships, because they may feel a sense of racial loyalty (Chronister & McWhirter, 2003; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Refugee and immigrant females may feel especially dependent on their partner for a connection to their home culture, and some may stay in the relationship to maintain their indigenous culture for their children.

It is arguable that the most challenging and complex minority group to work with is Latina women. This complexity has multiple layers. First, English is often not the primary language for Latina women, and thus a language barrier can exist. In Kasturirangan & Williams's (2003) interviews one woman stated that there was no advantage to calling 911 when her husband brutally assaulted her because no one at the dispatch site could speak Spanish and thus understand her concern. Kasturirangan & Williams (2003) interviewed nine women, and 89% of them did not speak English as their first language. In fact, one limitation of this study is the fact that 7 of the 9 interviews had to be translated, and some unique meaning is lost in the translation process. The second challenge to supporting female IPV survivors are the traditional gender and family roles within the Latino culture. Marianismo is the ideal behavior of women that is based on the Catholic adoration of Mary, Jesus' mother (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Mary was asked to bear a great deal of suffering without protest, and she was expected to sacrifice her life for her child. This too, is expected of Latino women. Therefore, it would not be uncommon for a Latina woman to see her willingness to endure IPV as a positive quality, and to stay with an abusive spouse in order to maintain the family unit structure for her children. All the women in this study had children, and cited them multiple times in their narratives.

5. Unlearning oppression. Experiences with oppression (often due to racism) over many years can make it especially difficult for minority women to work with "systems", and this system may include a counselor. It can be very difficult for these women to develop trust with their helping professional (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Oppression is the systemic discrimination of a person or group of people, and insecurities and frustrations of many clients can be deep rooted in the notion of oppression. Career counselors can help clients see oppression

is an unavoidable and unfortunate system that has been developed over many generations. Instead of seeing oppression as a subjective force that is personally attacking them, women may be able to revision oppression objectively, as a system that exists, but does not have to limit them.

6. Realize it often takes more than one try to permanently leave. The majority of participants in a study of 61 women (Chang et al., 2010) indicated that changes in an IPV relationship are gradual, and take place over months or years. Counselors need to be patient, and aware that a female client may choose to go back to her abuser multiple times before permanently terminating the abusive relationship. Chang et al (2010) developed the Psychosocial Readiness model that identifies three factors women need to be ready to leave IPV: Awareness of the Severity of Abuse, a Perceived Support system, and Self-efficacy/perceived personal power. There are high drop-out rates in the career counseling process with IPV survivors because women become ashamed if they return to their abuser, and do not want to reveal their decision to their counselor. In one study, 6 of 20 women dropped out of counseling pre-maturely, and 100% of the women who dropped out were still living with their abusers (Gianakos, 1999).

Women stay in abusive situations for a variety of reasons. A woman's decision to stay may be based in her religious beliefs. The majority of Latina women belong to the Catholic faith, a religion that strongly discourages separation from a husband. Therefore, some Latino women may stay in abusive relationships for years in order to follow religious doctrine (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). In a study in which nine females stayed with their abuse partners, only three women cited fear of what others would say as the primary reason that they stayed with their abuser. Three women stated they stayed with the abuser because they loved him, and three

women feared their abuser would retaliate against them, and stayed to avoid serious injury or death (Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As the literature implies, females face a unique set of challenges and barriers in their pursuit of careers that provide financial stability, personal satisfaction, and intellectual stimulation. Two groups of women face increased amounts of challenges and barriers when pursuing career goals: women transitioning from welfare reliance to self-sufficiency, and women transitioning away from intimate partner violence (IPV). It is important for career counselors to stay updated on the latest research in career counseling for women, and to use counseling interventions from a wide variety of models, with a particular emphasis on holistic, ecological, narrative, and strengths-based approaches. Assessment tools that are self-proctored and scored provide women with an opportunity to explore career options in a private and reflective manner, and a wide array of career counseling techniques can help women reach their educational goals.

Laws and legislation regarding welfare and IPV are subject to change, and a career counselor would be wise to stay up-to-date on the logistics of these public edicts. A career counselor should always be aware of the resources and support systems available to his or her clients in a specific community. Resources can come in a variety of forms: money, food, shelter, education and training, role models, support groups, child care, medical care, and skill building are just a few. Career counselors should be particularly well-versed in relation to resources related to financial budgeting, education, and children, as these are dominant areas of concern and challenge for many women in transition.

While there are many scholarly articles pertaining to women on welfare and women who survive IPV, there are limited practical resource guides for career counselors working with these populations. Career counselors can collaborate with and support their fellow helping

professionals by sharing insight and resources gained while working in the field. In an effort to add to the resources available to helping professionals, an *A-Z Guide for Career Counseling with Women Transitioning out of Poverty or Violence* is provided in the appendix that follows this paper. This resource guide is useful because it discusses topics that are organized alphabetically, allowing a counselor to quickly look up needed information, even within the actual counseling session. It is also a useful resource because it utilizes an informal and easy-to-read tone, emulating a conversation on paper. The bulleted formatting allows the career counselor to avoid sifting through lengthy paragraphs of text, so that he or she can quickly and concisely find the information that is needed. This resource guide is immediately applicable to the career counseling process: career counseling techniques are described in a way that makes them easy to implement. As a resource guide, the appendix provides lists of websites and book resources, and includes graphics of respected models used in the career counseling field.

As this paper indicates, exiting poverty, the welfare system, and/or intimate partner violence is not an overnight occurrence. Career counselors can be pivotal in providing female clients with support, skills, information, and hope. They ultimately help the client transition from their current life to a better one.

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APPENDIX. A TO Z GUIDE FOR CAREER COUNSELING WITH WOMEN
TRANSITIONING OUT OF POVERTY OR VIOLENCE

Advocate

There are a variety of venues in which you can advocate for women.

Childcare

- Extended hours. Many women enter the world of work in jobs that have inconvenient hours, and many work overnight shifts. Advocating to day care centers to provide overnight and weekend availability would give women a peace of mind. Some women are forced to leave children at home alone overnight, or leave them with unreliable acquaintances.
- Modified fees. It is not uncommon for a mother to spend \$1,000 a month on child care. Infant care is even more costly than care for toddlers and preschoolers. A sliding fee scale could be implemented, or scholarships could be provided. In addition, child care centers could consider a bartering system. If a woman is willing to clean the center after hours or complete charting/paper work, she could be reimbursed for her time with a certain number of free hours of child care.

Education

Many women are mothers. Juggling the challenges of motherhood and career is no easy task. Then, consider adding additional training and schooling into the mix. The career counselor can help the client advocate for themselves, or do the advocating for the client by:

- Role playing conversations with professors. Women may need to ask professors for extended time on assignments or alternative projects that demonstrate the same knowledge with fewer steps and/or less time commitment.
- Lobbying for increased financial funding for females attending college, particularly those who are impoverished and/or single parents. Specific
- Providing free seminars to develop the following skill sets: time management, organization, note-taking, study, and test-taking.

Employee Assistance Programs

- Support groups on site. A plethora of research indicates that women transitioning out of poverty and/or violence benefit from having a support system that includes successful role models. If a woman works a long day, she may be less motivated to drive to one more location to attend a support group. Attending a support group at the place of employment, in a break room or storage room, would provide easy accessibility, and help the woman feel supported in her work environment. She may see that other women she works with struggle with the same challenges she does. The company may consider providing child care and food during these groups.

Advocate

Employee Assistance Programs (continued)

- Train employers in IPV referrals. In recent years, employers have become more comfortable referring employees to EAP support services if they notice drug or alcohol abuse. However, it may be less common for an employer to refer a woman to services for IPV. Employers can be trained to look for warning signs of IPV, and learn appropriate ways to communicate concern and make the referral.

Law Enforcement

- Women in poverty often report frustration with biases and stereotypes related to poverty. Law enforcement can show non-judgmental empathy and support by simple things, such as volunteering at soup kitchens, and donating time at shelters.
- Women who have lived in violence may have a fear of authority figures, particularly male law enforcement. Therefore, law enforcement should be encouraged to receive additional training in working with female populations.
- Law enforcement may show support by being present when a woman moves out of her current violent environment and into a shelter.
- Law enforcement can help a woman and any dependents create safety and action plans for work, home, and school that they will use if the violent person in their life breaks a restraining order or comes into inappropriate contact with them.

Welfare Stipulations

- The American welfare system cuts off services to women after they have been on welfare for five cumulative years, regardless of their employment status, school status, or personal circumstances. Career counselors can advocate that exceptions be made for women on a case by case basis. It is possible that some women have made significant gains in their financial standing over the course of five years, but simply need more time to get across the poverty line.
- Career counselors may advocate that the welfare system consider a tiered system, in which the amount of money each woman receives is dependent on the amount of money she is currently making, the number of years she has left in school/training, and/or then number of loans/monthly debts she has.

Shelter Stipulations

- The majority of shelters are only available to women and children, and the age to be considered a child can be cut off at 16. A smaller percentage of shelters are men-only. This poses a problem for women with male children who are 16-20 years, and are still dependent on their mother for many services. Career counselors can advocate for family-based shelters that provide housing opportunities for all genders, regardless of age.
- Shelters could provide role models and mentoring programs to encourage and inspire women who are currently living there. Shelters should be encouraged to hold support groups and counseling sessions on site.

Biases and Stereotyping

We have been exposed to portrayals of stereotypical characters through multiple media outlets from a very young age. However, career counselors can play a vital role in dispelling stereotypes and helping female clients move beyond biases they may face.

It is important to note that a client's own worst enemy may be *herself*. If a client is stereotyping herself, techniques may need to be used to dispel her own irrational thoughts and beliefs.

Stereotypes that need to be eradicated:

- Women on Welfare and Women Who Do Not Leave Violent Partners are Uneducated.
In one sample of women in violent partnerships, 80% of the women had high school degrees, and 60% of them had completed some college. (Wettersten, 2004)
- Women on Welfare are Single Mothers.
Women on welfare come from all walks of life. They may be on welfare due to:
 - Divorce
 - Unexpectedly being laid off due to a poor economy
 - Mental or physical disabilities or medical problems
 - Caring for a parent, grandparent, sibling, or child with disabilities or medical problems
- Women on Welfare are Lazy.
12% of women become widowed in their lifetimes and are forced back into the world of work unexpectedly and suddenly. Grief and feelings of depression may prevent these women from immediately seeking out employment, or it may affect their ability to concentrate on the job and minimize their productivity. This does not mean they are lazy. It means they are going through emotional trauma that is exhausting and distracting. (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien 2002)

Women on welfare often times work two or three jobs just to equal the income that one professional job would provide. A lack of education or training severely limits a woman's job options, and thus working in minimum wage jobs, she may need to work 50-60 hours just to equal a salaried position that requires 40 hours a week. This is not laziness!

- Women Who Remain in Situations of Intimate Partner Violence (From This Point Forward Defined as IPV) are Weak.
Women in IPV may stay for a variety of reasons, and none of them include being weak. These reasons may include:
 - Fear that the violent person will physically, sexually, mentally, or emotionally harm her or her children.
 - Financial inability to find another home, and no available rooms in shelters.
 - Religious belief that divorce or separation from a spouse is a sin.
 - Hope that their partner may change.

Constructivist Approach

Career counseling benefits from utilizing a constructivist approach.

What is a Constructivist Approach?

Constructivism is a career counseling theory that empowers the client because they deconstruct their past and present, in order to construct a new and positive reality for their future.

Constructivism is defined by five tenets:

1. There is more than one reality that can be used to understand the world
2. Each life tells a unique story
3. Each woman creates her own life based on her personal interpretation of events
4. Relationships are vitally important for growth
5. Continual self-reflection is necessary for growth

What is the Role of the Career Counselor in the Constructivist Approach?

If a woman has the ability to create her own life story, she may need assistance ensuring that she writes a life story that is positive, encouraging, and based in rational thoughts.

Many women in poverty and violence have experienced trauma that has created irrational and dysfunctional thinking. These women may need help dispelling these thoughts and replacing them with logical ones. A career counselor can help!

The career counselor also helps the client construct realistic and obtainable short and long-term goals to be included in the life story. The career counselor will help the client uncover life themes that effect the construction of their reality. Themes of the past relate to future career choices.

Diversity

Every client is unique! Therefore, it is important for career counselors to use modifiers when working with female clients in poverty and violent scenarios. Words to use are:

- many
- some
- most
- frequently

It is good to avoid language that implies permanency or 100% compliance. Words to avoid are:

- always
- never
- must
- all
- everyone
- no one

There is no typical welfare recipient. AmeriCorps volunteers are often in their early 20s and devote two years of their live to volunteering in impoverished and high needs areas around the United States. Their dedication and personal sacrifice is great, but their government stipend is so low that they receive welfare benefits.

There is no “typical” survivor of IPV. In a random sample of 5 women with violent partners, three were African American, and two were European American. Their yearly incomes ranged from less than \$20,000 to more than \$200,000. Their abusive relationships lasted from 1 year to 17 years. (Hays & Chang, 2010)

Career counselors must think outside the box when working with females in poverty and violence. They must not categorize women due to their circumstances.

Education

Counselors can act as a liaison between their clients and educators/university faculty, advocating for a variety of resources as mentioned in the advocacy section of this resource guide.

The importance of education as a means to end poverty cannot be stressed enough.

A study reveals the annual earnings of American with various levels of education:

- High school drop outs: \$18,734
- High school graduates: \$27,915
- College graduates with a bachelor's degree: \$51,206
- Master's and doctoral degree holders: \$74,602 (www.howtoedu.org)

While the data above highlights a significant jump in income when a bachelor's degree is earned, it is important to note the value of an associate's degree as well. High school graduates with no college education collect an average weekly salary of \$583. That figure moves to \$670 for a person with an associate's degree: earnings jump nearly 15 percent!

(www.communitycollegereview.com)

Many women may become impoverished due to an unexpected job loss. Women leaving violent homes may need to relocate and thus find new jobs in their new environment. There is recent research that indicates taking some time away from the job search process after an unexpected job loss can be helpful for reducing anxiety and helping the unemployed person develop some healthy coping strategies (Gowan et al., 1999 as cited in McAtee & Benschoff, 2006).

A career counselor may be influential in helping a woman determine whether to pursue an associate's degree at a community college or a bachelor's degree at a University.

Benefits of Community College:

- Community college takes 18-24 months. Bachelor's programs at four-year universities are designed to take four years, but the majority of people graduating in the 21st century graduate in five years, not four.
- The client can get back into the world of work faster.
- Community colleges require fewer credits for graduation, so the schooling will be much less expensive.
- Credits from a community college are often transferable to a four-year university and can be used in the future towards a bachelor's degree later.
- Associate degrees are highly sought after in the technology fields, which is the field that is providing the largest percentage of new jobs in America. People trained in technical skills, such as diesel engineering, power plant technology, welding, electricians, and plumbers are in high demand, and there is a shortage of workers. Due to a high demand, competitive pay and benefits are available.

Education

One way to help a woman decide whether or not to pursue additional education and training is to evaluate her 4 S's:

1. Situation: The female client needs to consider the location she lives in. If she receives training in a field that does not employ people in her community, what is her willingness to commute or relocate? She should also consider her child care options. Who will take care of her children when she is at class?
2. Self : The client needs help establishing realistic education and career goals based on her interests. Does she have sincere interests in a career area that requires additional training? Is she interested in completing course work?
3. Supports: A person is much more likely to succeed at *anything* in life, if he or she has supportive “cheerleaders” in their corner of life’s metaphorical field. Do her family and friends value education and support her pursuit of education? If they don’t the career counselor, can refer the client to support groups or help set up a mentoring relationship in which the client has exposure to a female who has pursued education and is currently enjoying her career.
4. Strategies: Does the woman have strategies she can use to foster educational success? Time management? Good study habits? If not, these can be developed with the help of an amazing career counselor like yourself!

Feelings (They Need to Be Validated!)

Women in Poverty May Experience the Following Feelings:

- **Anxiety**
In a sample of 34 women, 88% of the participants indicated symptoms of anxiety
- **Hopelessness or depression.**
In the same sample of 34 women, 50% indicated symptoms of depression,
- **Exhaustion (physically and mentally)**
76% of welfare-reliant women in a study stated that they had health concerns that limited their ability to work. (Bloom 2009)
- **Frustration**
Women on welfare may be working multiple jobs with low hourly wages, no benefits, and no vacation time. They may feel they are working very hard and seeing very little results. If their federal funding is discontinued they may feel abandoned just when they were beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel.
- **Injustice**
Some women may perceive their gender, age, race, or ethnicity as a barrier to receiving good paying jobs and support through community resources. Oppression is a systemic system that is a reality for many women.

Women Living in Violent Environments May Experience the Following Feelings:

- **Fear**
Women may fear that if they leave their abuser, they will be stalked and further hurt. They may fear for the safety of their children.
- **Shame**
The American Dream is still often packaged as a two heterosexual people living in a multi-level home with children and an SUV. If a woman's romantic relationship is unhealthy and unhappy, there can be feelings of shame.
- **Embarrassment**
Physical markings of abuse can be difficult to hide, and violent outbursts from a partner in a public setting can be embarrassment.
- **Failure**
A woman may feel (whether logical or not) that she did not try hard enough at her relationship or that she is somehow to blame for the anger and violence her partner portrays. Unfortunately, there is still an unwritten societal rule that expects women to "hold out" and "keep trying" in abusive situations.
- **Distrust**
If a woman's integrity and trust is broken by an intimate partner she once shared a close connection with, it may be hard for her to trust people in the future. This may be especially true of members of the same sex of her abuser.

Feelings (They Need to Be Validated!)

Looking on the bright side, women in poverty and/or violence may also feel positive feelings. These feelings should be applauded and can be highlighted to maintain a positive and strengths-based counseling process.

Positive Feelings May Include:

- **Pride**
They may work hard to survive or they may work hard to make a difficult relationship fruitful.
- **Accomplished**
If a woman is able to utilize her welfare income and her job earnings to maintain living in an apartment and not living in a shelter than she certainly is victorious.
- **Confident**
A woman may have the attitude, “If I can survive this, I can survive anything.”
- **Relief**
After finally leaving a violent scenario or finally receiving financial support, a woman may feel she is able to breathe easier; she may see light at the end of the tunnel, or believe the adage that “it can only go up from here.”

A career counselor *cannot* change a client’s feelings or make them go away. (It sounds obvious, but sometimes we do need to remind ourselves that we are not expected to be miracle workers.)

Often times a client simply wants to be heard, and have her feelings normalized. This can be accomplished through working with a career counselor who utilized empathy, unconditional positive regard, and active listening. The career counselor may actually need to say very little.

Group Therapy

Support Groups and Group Therapy Provide Many Benefits:

- Increase in self-efficacy. Women tend to be rational by nature and group members can offer encouragement and positive reinforcement that will increase a woman's self-efficacy,
- Opportunities to learn vicariously through their peers by hearing success stories and learning what coping strategies work
- Opportunities to practice empathy. Women can empathize with each other, as many of them are facing similar barriers and challenges.
- Opportunities to work on communication skills through didactic discussions.
- Opportunities to analyze their career interests, values, goals, and abilities
- Support and resources for researching information about possible careers
- Information about how to set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). They will learn the difference between immediate, short-term, and long-term goals, and the importance of having all three types.
- They have time and support to learn practical skills, such as: networking, resume writing, and interviewing.
- Groups provide a non-blood family to women without supportive "blood" relatives.
- Exposure to role models is imperative. If a female sees a successful role model in a specific career that she had previously thought women she could not be successful in, that female is more likely to pursue that career and believe she will be successful in that career.
- Opportunities for guest speakers who are experts in their field and can share their skill and knowledge. These speakers can provide increased awareness of community resources that may be poorly advertised or confusing/difficult to access.

Super's developmental life stages and their effect on women's career choices can be used to formulate an eight-phase group therapy model.

Social Cognitive Career Therapy is also easily applicable to group therapy.

Techniques Utilized in Group Therapy:

- "New and Good". This technique is used at the beginning of each session to establish a strength-based and positive environment. Each woman in the circle shares things in her life that are new and/or good.
- Acknowledgements. At the end of every session, the women can sit in a circle and provide a positive acknowledgement of the person sitting to her left. Everyone leaves each session receiving a positive compliment that increases self-efficacy.

Group Therapy

Techniques Utilized in Group Therapy (continued):

- **Listening Pairs.** Women in the group are divided into partnerships, and provided an opportunity to share thoughts, feelings, and emotions in a non-judgmental atmosphere without interruption. They can receive feedback on their comments, and may be called out on illogical or dysfunctional thoughts and beliefs.
- **Role playing.** By role playing a possible scenario with an employer, co-worker, family, friend, or child, the woman will be better prepared when she actually faces that situation. Role playing in which a woman practices self-talk out loud can be especially helpful in the woman identifying negative thoughts. She may be instructed to use thought stoppers or reframing to think in more positive ways.
- **Guided imagery and fantasy play.** They allow woman to envision themselves in new careers.
- **Journaling assignments to discover self.**
- **Self relaxation exercises.** Gradual muscle relaxation and guided imagery with non-lyrical music are good choices.

NOTE: some women, especially those in violent relationships, may simply not be ready to be a member of a group yet. Don't push, but continue to provide non-threatening invitations to support group opportunities.

Holistic Counseling

Holistic career counseling acknowledges that a woman's life is an intricate web of many different life roles. There is not one life role that is, by default, more inherently valuable or important than any other life role. The career counselor can help the female client explore her multiple life roles, and determine which life roles she places greater emphasis on. With the career counselor's support, the client may wish to restructure her life roles, so that some take more precedence, and others that have been taking a lot of time and energy, are put into balance.

Below is just a beginning list of the many life roles a woman may hold:

- Daughter
- Spouse
- Sister
- Mother
- Friend
- Teacher
- Learner
- Worker related to a paid career
- Volunteer
- Religious believer
- Athlete
- Voter

A holistic counselor acknowledges that a woman's career life affects and is affected by her family life, career life, social life, and belief systems. The various components of a woman cannot be compartmentalized; instead they ebb and flow together to make a whole.

In addition to acknowledging the woman's many life roles, it is important to recognize the impact that a woman's environment has on her. A holistic approach to counseling is tied into an ecological model. Bronfenbrenner established the impact of three ecological systems on each individual:

1. **Microsystem:** the environment most close to a female. This includes her place of employment, home, church, and peers' homes.
2. **Exosystem:** an intermediate influence that includes mass media, health agencies, schools, restaurants, and local community settings.
3. **Macrosystem:** this level of environmental influence includes abstract entities such as political systems, economics, nationality, and culture. While the macrosystem may seem far away, it is important for the career counselor to help the client increase her awareness of these systems and the effect they play on her career and other components of life without her even being consciously aware of their effects.

Isolation

Redefining Family:

Isolation is caused by a lack of a support system. Many women who are transitioning out of violent homes, may be leaving their spouses and/or children. Their familial structure is being completely altered, and they may lose their sense of what family is. A woman may need to redefine the word family.

In addition, women leaving in poverty may face discrimination and be have limited social opportunities to interact with family due to long and extended work hours.

Family May Become:

- Trusted neighbors
- Friends and acquaintances from support groups
- Helping professionals
- Religious leaders
- Co-workers

Depression:

A large concern about isolation is that it may lead to depression, and effect a woman's well-being. In a recent study, 5.9% of the welfare-reliant women were identified themselves as having a positive well-being, while 60% the norm population identified with a positive well-being.

(Hildebrandt & Keller, 2005)

A large concern with depression is that it may escalate into major depressive episodes, mood disorder, and suicidal ideations. Therefore, isolation should be avoided at all costs.

Some women may struggle to form connections with women in their local communities.

Isolation can be combated through hotlines. A list of hotlines is provided below:

24/7 Support Systems:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| - National Domestic Violence Hotline | 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) |
| - Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network | 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) |
| - National Stalking Resource Center: | 1-800- FYI-CALL (394-2255) |
| - National Teen Dating Violence Hotline | 1-866-331-9474 |
| - National Child Sexual Abuse Hotline | 1-866-FOR-LIGHT (367-5444) |

It's important to note that women who are actively involved in marriages or romantic partnerships have the right to abstain from sex, and if forced into sexual activity are victims of rape.

Isolation

The 21st century has taken the whole world viral. Social support can be provided online through blogs and live chat rooms. Before utilizing social media as a form of support, a woman should weigh its pros and cons.

Pros of Social Media:

- IPV victims and women in poverty can maintain confidentiality and anonymity.
- It is a free form of socialization that does not require transportation or child care to participate in.
- It allows women to have exposure to relationships with women of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, communicating with women around the world.
- It is accessible 24/7.
- It provides a low-risk environment in which a woman can practice her communication and networking skills.

Negatives of Social Media:

It lacks emotional closeness that is provided through physical proximity.

- Perpetrators may be on live chat rooms with false identities. If a woman is misled by a perpetrator she is essentially being revictimized.
- It lacks emotional closeness that is provided through physical proximity.
- Written communication does not have verbal inflection and intonation, so moods, emotions, and implications may be misinterpreted.

Job Skills

To be competitive in the job market, women need exposure to a variety of job skills, including:

Assertiveness Training:

- Utilizing “I statements” to reflect needs and wants in a respectful tone
- Professionally suggesting alternatives to suggestions made by co-workers and employers
- Letting an employer know if a job is too difficult or if additional training is required

Communication Skills:

- An awareness of non-verbals, posture, and facial affect
- An ability to talk slowly and clearly with positive intonation
- Active listening

Interviewing Skills:

- Professional dress
- Answering questions with complete sentences, specific examples
- Firm hand shake
- Appropriate eye contact
- Appropriate length of responses

Negotiation Skills:

- Ask for a pay raise.
- Requesting time off or a change in scheduled hours
- Asking for a job promotion.
- Asking for a current job description to be modified

Organizational Skills:

- Utilization of a planner
- To-do lists with blank boxes that provide a place to “check off” a task once completed
- Ability to triage tasks according to their level of importance

Resume Writing Skills:

- Present tense, action-oriented verbs
- Exciting and memorable adjectives
- Utilization of a well-organized template
- Inclusion of an e-mail address and phone number (may need to use community resources or donated phones/track phone)
- Inclusion of transferable skills, worded in a way that makes them applicable to the job applied for

Time Management:

- Not over committing to too many tasks
- Setting specific goals to be accomplished in specific time measurements

Kids

Kids play an important role in the lives of women. When providing counseling a for a woman, it is always beneficial for the career counselor to consider the entire family unit, as they are an extension of the woman's self.

90% of welfare recipients in 2001 were single mothers with kids.

(US Department of Health and Human Services)

Many women conceptualize work as a means to provide security and opportunities for their children. If women are living in survival mode, it may not have even occurred to them that a career could serve as a confidence builder and a component of self-identity. Having a job sets a good example for children. Attending work regularly and showing up on time role models civic and personal responsibility for young people.

While there are many benefits to motherhood, it is important that the counselor acknowledge that it certainly comes with a unique set of challenges and barriers:

Depression:

Women with three or more children are at increased odds for depression. (Zabkiewicz 2009)

Extended Time Away From Work:

Women who have children may need to take maternity leave, and some employers may find it more beneficial for the company to simply lay the new mother off than to give her an extended break. If provided with maternity leave, it could be unpaid, leaving a woman in financial hardship. Kids get sick. If a woman does not have any paid time off, she may lose her wage for the day.

Isolation From Children:

Many women required to work in order to receive welfare regretted that they had to work long shifts, and were unable to spend time with their children after school. Some mothers may become frustrated because the time they spend with their children is frequently early in the morning or late at night, and includes activities such as feeding, bathing, clothing, and putting children to sleep. Completing enrichment activities with their children, such as reading books, creating art, going to parks, and experiential learning can be few and far between.

Limited Freedom and Choice:

While the majority of women in American prefer to work, some mothers would like to be stay-at-home moms. This simply is not an option if a woman lives in poverty. In order to receive financial support from the government, she is required to work. She may work in a profession that she does not enjoy, and thus career is not an opportunity for her to express herself and develop her identity. Instead, it is a requirement in order to survive.

Kids

Medical and Health Concerns:

In a study of 500 mothers on welfare, 56% were currently unemployed because of a child's health. Many day care centers cannot provide care for a child who has significant special needs, thus the parent is forced to turn to home day care, which may not be regulated and of lower quality. Families on welfare are twice as likely to have a child who is disabled or severely disabled than a family that is self-sufficient.

(Hildebrandt & Stevens, 2009)

How Can Career Counselors Help?:

Create a safety plan. For all children, but especially those who have lived in a violent home, a safety plan is essential. Safety plans can be executed at home, work, and school. This safety plans need to be explained to children in kid-friendly language with a positive attitude. One fear that prevents many women from leaving their abusers is the fear that their abuser will be enraged, and will pursue her and her children with intent to physically harm them. Leaving an abusive home is an anxiety-riddled scenario, but a counselor can help relieve some of this anxiety by helping the family be prepared.

Help the mother and child/children communicate. If a mother has to work evenings, and does not see her children after they get home from school and before they go to bed, she may utilize a journal to write a special message to them. The children can write back, so that the mom has a positive and encouraging message to come home to at the end of her shift.

Legislation and Laws

While working with women in underserved and minority populations, such as poverty and IPV, it is imperative to be aware of legislation and laws that guide the availability and distribution of resources.

Legislation and laws are continually changing and evolving, so no career counselor is expected to be an expert in the field. However, it is helpful to have an awareness of the “alphabet soup” that translates into laws. This page provides a helpful overview for you to get your feet wet in the topic!

Prior to 1996, the United States welfare legislation was called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). This programming is now defunct.

In 1996 the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) was founded. This reconciliation act implemented the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programming, which is the welfare program currently in use in the United States.

The new TANF welfare legislation was defined by a “work first” mentality. People receiving benefits must be working in at least a part-time job. In order to be considered “part time” the individual must work at least 30 hours a week.

What type of work counts towards these 30 hours?

- No educational or training hours count towards the 30 hours.
- No volunteer work counts towards the 30 hours.
- No time spent with jobs service companies can count towards the 30 hours.

The new welfare legislation is time sensitive. Women can only receive federal benefits for a total of 5 cumulative years (60 months). After that five years, each individual state government can choose to provide benefits, but as of 2005, only 8 of the 50 states do so.

The new legislation removes cash benefits. These could be used for items like: child care provided by friends and acquaintances in home setting, groceries, and medications.

Clearly, this new legislation creates many hoops that women have to jump through in order to get financial assistance while they are transitioning out of poverty.

Legislation and Laws

Intimate Partner Violence Laws:

- You are a mandatory reporter.
Clients may want to leave their violent partner, but not want them to face legal repercussions. It is important to let the client know that, as a helping professional who follows the American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics, you are a mandatory reporter of child abuse.
- It may be tempting to not report for fear of destroying the rapport and trust you have with your client, but it is your obligation to report.

There are Consequences For the Perpetrator!:

- Each state has a procedure for reporting IPV to law enforcement agencies or child protective services. Our criminal justice system now deals with IPV as a unique offense. Domestic violence is no longer treated as a simple battery. Consequently, our system imposes enhanced and specialized sentences for these offenses.
- Domestic violence is considered a crime of moral turpitude. Thus, when a person has a conviction for domestic violence on his or her record, his or her credibility can be called into question when testifying.

Possible Consequences for Perpetrators of IPV:

- Revocation of immigrant status
- Restrain from owning or possessing a firearm
- Restricted or no visitation with children
- Restraining orders
- Revocation of license to operate a business
- Limited ability to apply for membership in certain professional and social organizations
- Monetary fines
- Jail time
- Loss of the right to collect alimony or spousal support

(www.streetdirectory.com)

Money and Budgeting

The Importance of a Livable Wage:

When career counselors seek to help women transition out of poverty, it is logical that one goal is to help the woman procure and maintain employment. *BUT*, employment is only a solution to poverty when the wages earned match the cost of living, and this is simply not the case in many countries, and in many jobs that are available to welfare-reliant women.

Many women leaving the welfare system need training in monetary budgeting. A common coping strategy for paying bills while on welfare was to leave the “least important” bills unpaid and wait to see how creditors responded. Career counselors can help clients see this planning process as irrational, with negative consequences.

Consequences of Unpaid Debt:

- Low credit score
- Inability to qualify for home loans, car loans, and student loans.
- Inability to qualify for credit cards. If a credit card is obtained, astronomically high interest rates may apply.
- Inability to get checking account
- Restructuring of child support. The woman may not get to decide how to spend her child support; a government advocate may buy supplies for her.

How Can Career Counselors Help With Budgeting?:

- Women need longer savings plan. The majority of women in poverty budget on a week to week basis. The goal should be to move them towards month to month budgeting.
- Identify “money wasters”. Every woman’s money wasters may be different, but here are some common ones:
 - Cosmetology (hair coloring and cuts, acrylic nails, facial/skin treatments, tanning)
 - Drinks (lattes, smoothies, alcohol)
 - Clothing (designer labels, shoes that cannot be worn in a variety of settings)
 - Cell phones (decorative covers, unlimited texts, specialized ring tones)
- Teach delayed gratification. By delaying gratification, a woman can build up a savings account and make larger purchases.
- Help differentiate between needs and wants.
- Teach multi-level goal setting. Career counselors can help females set immediate, short-term, and long-term financial goals. Each level of goals is vital. Immediate goals allow the woman to feel success and boost her self-confidence immediately. Short-term goals keep her on track to achieving long terms goals, and long-term goals allow the women to see emancipation from her enslavement to the welfare system.

Money and Budgeting

Money and Transitioning Out of Violence:

The earning potential of IPV survivors is very low when they first leave their abusers 92% of participants in an IPV study made less than \$10,000 a year. (Brown, 2005)

Women leaving a violent relationship may have never had an opportunity to budget in their lifetime because their controlling romantic partner did not allow them to keep their own earnings and decide how to spend them.

Limited exposure to budgeting and spending may leave IPV survivors with unrealistic expectations about the cost of living. Their abusive partners could hidden their true income. One technique a career counselor can use it to have IPV survivors research the cost of everyday living supplies, in order to prepare for self-sufficiency.

Narrative Approach

Counselor's Role in Narrative Approach:

Narrative counseling requires a collaborative approach, in which the counselor and the client are co-authoring the narrative. This relationship requires empathy, rapport building, and trust. The counselor is *not* perceived as an expert. Instead, he or she is simply along for the journey and to provide encouragement.

Benefits to Narrative Approach:

- Acknowledges the multiple facets of a woman's life.
- Helps a woman stay positive and forward thinking.
- Empowers the woman, because she realizes she is in charge of writing her own life story, and the ending has yet to be written.
- Acknowledges the holistic nature of woman and the counseling process. Before addressing career issues, counselors must first address large changes in women's social relationships and emotional statuses.
- It acknowledges multiple life contexts, including historical, society, and career contexts.
- Helps with positive identity formation.
A woman realizes that she is the expert on her own life story and has the ultimate authority in writing and re-writing that story.
- Narrative therapy appeals to all ages, races, and genders. It is great for multi-cultural work and work with minority populations.

Limitations to Narrative Approach:

- There is a lack of empirical research studies in conjunction with narrative therapy, and thus its validity is difficult to prove.
- Narrative therapy is abstract and subjective, making it not a suitable fit for some concrete, black and white thinkers.
- It does not utilize formal assessment tools, which can make it difficult to defend for reimbursements and governmental programs.

There are Three Phases to Narrative Career Counseling:

1. Co-construction: the counselor and client work together to uncover the client's life story and identify life roles.
2. Deconstruction: the life story is opened up and examined from multiple viewpoints in order to find deviations from the life themes, imagine possible selves, and discover preferred ways of living.
3. Construction: allows the client to create a future career story. This is a co-authoring process, as the counselor helps the client write their story and rebuild their life with new realities.

Oppression (It Must Be Unlearned!)

Oppression is the systemic discrimination of a person or group of people, and insecurities and frustrations of many clients can be deep rooted in the notion of oppression.

- Oppression is complex. It is an interaction of multiple variables:
 - Race, ethnicity
 - Socio-economic status
 - Gender
 - Sexual orientation
 - Religious affiliation
 - Political party affiliation
 - Familial origins
- Oppression is not personal. The career counselor can help the client come to see that oppression has existed for thousands of years, and is not something that they brought upon themselves. Instead of seeing oppression as a subjective force that is personally attacking them, women may be able to revision oppression objectively, as a system that exists, but does not have to limit them.

What Can Career Counselors Do?:

- Create a balance. Yes, you want to help the client unlearn their beliefs about oppression, but you also want to express sensitivity towards their experiences with oppression. Validate their feelings. Acknowledge that oppression have many negative emotions tied to it. Then, when appropriate, move on to building a new reality.
- Model empowering self-talk. If a person says something enough times, she begins to believe it.
- Help clients avoid self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that causes itself to come true due to the simple fact that the prediction was made. This happens when a woman's beliefs influence her actions. If a woman believes her employer is going to oppress her, she may act in ways that make her a target for oppression. If a woman figures she will get laid off anyways, she may not perform job duties at an acceptable standard or may show up late for work, and in effect, actually get laid off.
- Help the client begin to trust systems. Experiences with oppression over many years can make it especially difficult for minority women to work with "systems", and this system may include a counselor. It can be very difficult for these women to develop trust with helping professionals and agencies. Career counselors have the unique opportunity to build a relationship with the client, and help them come to trust.

Possible Selves

What Is a Possible Self?:

A possible self is a life option that a person envisions for themselves. There are different types of possible selves:

- Positive possible self.
- Hoped-for possible self. This type of possible self is differentiated from a positive possible self, because, while it is positive in nature, it does not have a well-established action plan behind it. It may not be as achievable as the positive possible self.
- Feared possible self. This possible self is a self that the client believes she has a predisposition to become. She wants to avoid becoming this possible self.
- Negative possible self.

Benefits of Possible Selves:

- Help the client remain future-oriented and not dwell on the negatives of their past or present situation.
- Help the client develop goal setting skills.
- Provide a concrete action plan to base the career counseling process on.

Tips for Career Counselors:

- It is best to keep these possible selves as concrete as possible.
- It is advantageous to have more than one occupational possible self. This way, if one does not come to fruition, the woman can remain positive and continue in her search.
- Possible selves will evolve and change over time. This is healthy and normal. A woman may begin with the possible self of a Certified Nurse Assistance (CNA), develop a possible self of a registered nurse (RN) in 5-10 years, and evolve her possible into a nurse practitioner (NP) as a lifetime goal.
- Clients may need help developing *realistic* possible selves. Although comical, a truth 5'4" female in poverty would not be doing herself a favor if her possible self was a National Football League (NFL) quarterback.
- Role models are key. If possible, a career counselor can set up an opportunity for a female client to meet another woman who is currently in the occupation that is the client's possible self.
- A smart alternative to developing possible selves may be to help clients develop feared selves. It is often overwhelming for a woman to think about what her perfect career would be. Instead, it may be easier to use deductive reasoning and start narrowing the job search by crossing off jobs that they would not like to do.

Quilting a Support System

While simple, the quilt can be used as a powerful metaphor for women transitioning out of poverty or violence.

Any time a person faces a life transitions, there can be feelings of fear, uncertainty, and isolation. A woman may not know where to turn to. It may be helpful the counselor to literally have the client create multiple quilt blocks, and then piece them together. When starting with one simple quilt block (one dominant support) the client may feel like she does not have much to work with. Once she begins to piece multiple blocks together, she will see her support system grow.

To add to the metaphor, the client can envision herself is the thread that holds each quilt block together. This may create feelings of relief and empowerment. The client begins to see that she does not have to face her situation alone. In fact, she does not even have to “be” a quilt block. She simply has to be the thread that strings all the blocks of the support quilt together, and helps them form a unified whole. This quilt metaphor has ties to Gestalt therapy, as the quilt itself becomes something greater than the sum of each block of the quilt.

Provided below is a visual representation of what a woman’s quilt block may look like. If the client has any artistic ability, she may choose to paint the quilt blocks, or actually use fabric to create a quilt. If the woman has limited artistic ability, paper and pencil will do. One benefit of the quilt visual representation is that it provides a tangible reminder of the support system, and is a concrete item that can be taken away from the counseling process.

Mom	Oldest sister	Counselor	Next-door neighbor
Welfare case manager	Youngest sister	Shelter supervisor	Nurse practitioner
Law Enforcement	Grandmother	Best Friend	Co-worker
Aerobics Instructor	Children’s School principal	University Advisor	Pastor at church

Resources and Services

Career counselors must continually update themselves on the resources and services available to women in their immediate community and in surrounding areas.

Resources can be divided into two categories: Personal resources and Community Resources. Career counselors are strongly encouraged to create a quick reference guide with hours of operation, phone numbers, and websites for resources in the following categories.

Personal Resources:

- Children
- Exercise (group fitness classes, community trails and parks system)
- Friends and Family
- Housing
- Jobs
- Journaling and self-reflection
- Music
- Relaxation techniques (guided imagery, focused breathing)
- Role models

Community Resources:

- Addiction groups: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
- Food pantries and soup kitchens
- Homeless shelters
- Hotlines, live chat groups
- Job clubs
- Law enforcement
- Legal Advice (district attorneys, Child protective services)
- Medical facilities (natural family planning, general health clinics)
- Pastors and religious leaders
- Psychologist/ psychiatrist (mental health screening, assessment, and diagnostic purposes)
- Support groups
- Thrift stores
- Toast Masters clubs (experience with public speaking is helpful in job interviews)
- Transportation (bus line, taxis)

Strengths Based Approach

Tips for Career Counselors:

- Teach clients learned optimism. Over time, a client can retrain their brain to think in a more positive manner.
- Help the client create a positive vocabulary. For example, instead of describing an experience as a failure or defeat, define it as a temporary set-back, learning experience, or growing opportunity. Do not set out to change or fix, instead utilize positive words like building and creating anew.
- Hone in on the learning opportunities that arise from set-back. Learning is a positive thing! To foster, learning, lead the client through self-reflective questioning.
 - If I get the opportunity to do this again, what might I do differently?
 - What have I learned from this experience?
- Encourage the client to keep a gratitude journal.
- Help the client write a “10 Things I Like About Me” List
- Identify the client’s assets. To help, utilize Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Assessment.

Benefits of Multiple Intelligences Assessment:

- Empowers women because it is a self-report measure, providing privacy during self-exploration.
- Allows women to come to a conclusion about themselves on their own, because they are the ones evaluating their scores.
- Helps women uncover and nurture their transferable skills.
- Women begin to expand their vocational identity.
- Gardner’s assessment provides a table that corresponds careers with each of the intelligence, so women have support as they begin to brainstorm their possible selves.
- Every person has a dominant intelligence, ensuring that every person can perceive themselves as intelligent in at least one way.

The 9 Multiple Intelligences:

- Bodily/Kinesthetic
- Existentialist
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Linguistic
- Logical/Mathematical
- Musical
- Naturalist
- Visual/Spatial

Techniques

There are a multitude of counseling techniques that a career counselor can utilize when working with women in transition. It would be illogical to try to summarize them all here. I have included a few career counseling techniques to consider. They are listed alphabetically.

Action Plan:

An action plan is different than a goal because, in addition to setting a goal, the action plan requires the client to establish a systematic approach to achieving that goal

Before a strong action plan can be created, the client must first learn about and become comfortable with positive uncertainty. Positive uncertainty is simply the awareness that the future cannot be foreseen or controlled, but it can be viewed in a positive light with hopeful expectations. An action plan increases a woman's resiliency, because it provides a back-up plan.

Action plans take on a wide variety of formats. They can be drawn out to look like an obstacle course or map. They can be written down. It is advisable that the action plan become a hard copy so the woman can sign it. Signing the action plan creates a binding contract, and may increase the woman's motivation to follow through on her plan.

Career Clusters Exploration:

There are 14 career clusters that represent thousands of jobs. It is likely that job opportunities exist in careers that the client did not even know existed. A career cluster inventory can be found for free online at www.okcareertech.org.

Deal-Breakers:

This activity is powerful for women who are attempting to leave IPV. It is important to note that most women return to their abusive partners at least once before permanently terminating the relationship. The counselor can help the client explore her motivators for leaving the abusive scenario. A card sort could be used to explore deal breakers. In order to do this, a counselor could take 10 note cards and write one motivator for leaving on each card. Motivators may include: increased social isolation, public humiliation, abuse towards children, rape, etc. The woman can sort the motivators into two piles: "deal breakers" and "non-deal breakers". The client may determine that if there are five or more cards in her deal breaker pile she will take an action step towards transitioning out of the relationship.

Techniques

Goal Setting:

Many women who have lived in survival mode due to poverty or violence, may have never had goals beyond making it to the next day. Thus, they will need a structured model for goals setting, and I suggest SMART goals.

S= specific. If a woman does not know her end point, how will she know she has reached her goal? The wording of the goal needs to be specific.

M= measurable. It is simply not enough to state that a woman wants to get a job that can help her leave welfare reliance. How will she measure the job to determine if it will meet the requirements to get her out of poverty? Her goal needs to be measurable. This can be accomplished by setting due dates and salary income numbers.

A= achievable. To become a neurologist with an associate's degree is not a reality. To make \$100,000 a year with an associate's degree may not be attainable either. Women in transition may simply have little experience in career, and thus not know what an average salary is for certain occupations. The career counselor can provide resources so the client becomes better informed.

R= realistic. This is similar to the achievable step.

T= timely. Success does not happen overnight. What is a reasonable? If the goal is to get a job, when will the job be obtained by?

Lifeline:

Life line is a technique used in conjunction with narrative counseling. In this technique a woman takes a large piece of paper and draws a time line on it. She labels the life line with life chapters, which are major dates and life events. These chapters can be titled, and may include a figure or picture that goes along with them to symbolize that moment in a client's life. The life line may help a client identify labels she has worn throughout her life, and themes that her life story has ascribed to.

Role Playing:

Role playing provides a risk-free, non-judged opportunity for a woman to practice a variety of skills sets.

Techniques

Wellness Wheel/Wellness Model:

The goal for any counselor and their client is for the client to reach a point where she is able to function in society productively and in a healthy way while maintaining autonomy. In order to achieve this state, women can be introduced to the wellness wheel. Some women may have a very limited definition of wellness, and may need to expand their perception of wellness. The wellness wheel is a circle that is composed of six types of wellness:

- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Spiritual
- Environmental

If a woman is well in one component, but not in others she will see that the visual representation of her wheel will be lopsided. If the wheel is lopsided it will not be able usable, and therefore cannot transport the client to her future goals.

For those clients, who are more linear in nature, the wellness model can be modified to be on a continuum and not in a wheel. The continuum runs from -5 to +5. The -5 equals death, 0 equals wellness, and +5 equals optimal wellness. The term “optimal wellness” is subjective and may need to be better defined by the client. For each client, optimal wellness is going to be different.

Unity

Helping professionals benefit greatly when they utilize a collaborative approach. No career counselor, or any helping professional, should be made to work alone. No man is an island. The word team can be viewed as an acrostic:

T= together

E= everyone

A= achieves

M= more

The ultimate goal is to help the client. We can do that more efficiently and productively if we do it together. I have provided a list of helping professionals that a career counselor may work with.

Law Enforcement:

- To ensure that restraining orders are followed. A woman who is living in a state of fear and panic, will be less able “work” during a counseling session.

Psychologists and Psychiatrists:

- These helping professionals can do mental health screenings and assessments for mood disorders, personality disorders, intelligence, and learning disabilities.
- These professionals can prescribe medication that can greatly improve the quality of life that some female clients have. If a female client is suffering from psychosis or a major depressive episode, the physical state of her brain may not allow her to do “work” in a counseling session. By taking a medication, the brain can be healed or stabilized, so that the client can benefit from counseling sessions.

Religious Leaders:

- Spirituality is an important component of many women’s identities. Career counselors can consult with religious leaders to learn more about various religions, and to make sure that they are not sending mixed messages to the client if they each meet with the client on a regular, individual basis.

Social Workers:

- Social workers can keep the career counselor up to date on the time and location of family visitation, and can provide data on home visits, if applicable.

Welfare Case Workers:

- Welfare case workers may have valuable information on community and government resources that are available to the client.

Volunteer Work

Some female clients will simply be unable to get into the world of work right away due to economic recession, lack of education, insufficient skills, and a score of other reasons.

While the client is waiting for the economy to improve, taking courses to receive an additional degree or certification, and developing her skill sets, she can be encouraged to volunteer.

Benefits of Volunteering:

- To gain or share knowledge about health, violence, and education within her community.
- Break social isolation and form friendships.
- Satisfy innate curiosity.
- Develop skill sets by using certain skills in the volunteering environment.
- Give back to the schools that her children or she herself attended.
- Network with professionals.
- Practice verbal and non-verbal skills.
- Develop ability to follow a schedule and work in a specific “shift”.
- Learn coping skills for working with clients and co-workers who are less than agreeable.
- Exposure to positive role models.
- Exposure to a variety of occupations.

Places a Woman May Volunteer (This Is Just a Starting Point- the Opportunities are Endless!):

- Humane Society
- Family planning clinic
- Parks and Recreation
- Prison
- School
- Day care center
- Museum or Art Gallery
- Hospital
- Church
- Camp
- Abused Adult Resource Center
- Hotline/Quitline communication center
- Red Cross building (shelter, soup kitchen, thrift store)

Career counselors should advocate for increased volunteer work opportunities for impoverished women. Volunteering is a good alternative to working low wage jobs that are meaningless and stressful. If women were allowed to do structured and monitored volunteer work in their direct communities, they would be able to have a positive influence on their direct environment, which could increase self-efficacy.

Worth

Every one of our clients has worth! We can help them know and believe that they matter!

Differentiate Between Self-Esteem and Self-Worth:

Self-esteem: thinking highly of oneself; pride in accomplishments. Esteem is based in something we have done. Esteem is external, coming from outside ourselves.

Self-worth: inherent value simply because we exist. It is the empowering of oneself.

People With Self-Worth:

- Trust their selves to solve problems.
- Do not lose excessive time worrying over past mistakes or fearing making mistakes tomorrow.
- Resist manipulation and peer pressure, knowing that they have choices.
- Know that having self-worth does not make someone haughty or conceited.

Ways to Increase Self-Worth:

(These can be shared with clients, and they are helpful reminders for career counselors too!)

- Forgive yourself when you make a mistake.
- Be grateful for your gifts and talents.
- Listen to the voice inside your head. If it is negative, tell it to shut up. This can literally be a verbal command.
- Do not compare yourselves to others. It is not helpful, because you will never be them.
- Create a list of your accomplishments and review it on a daily basis.
- Write down your goals and read them daily. This will remind you that you have a purpose and you are on your way to achieving something great!
- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Work on being in the here and now, with no agenda.
- Create positive mantras, and say them daily.
- Remind yourself that nothing is permanent, and things will always evolve and change.

Xperience (Transferable Skills)

When you initially meet with a client, you may be surprised to find that they cannot identify any skills that they have that would be valuable in the world of work. It is impossible for any individual to have zero skills. Through the process of living, people develop survival skills and communication skills, whether they intend to or not.

The career counselor can help the client begin to reframe her perception of her abilities. Many skills that are developed in the home and through living can be transferred into a variety of careers. Our life experience can be reworded and marketed in many ways.

Listed below are some ways to transform common skills that women have into possible careers.

- Good with children = work at a child care center or start one in their home
- Green fingers and talent in gardening = work in produce section of grocery store, florist shop, nursery, or landscaping firm.
- Obsessed with cleanliness = start a residential cleaning service
- Good at teaching = become certified to be a personal trainer, life style coach
- Good at baking/ cooking= open a catering center, work in a bakery, or be a short-line cook in a restaurant
- Talented at clothes tailoring = open a modest boutique that offers tailoring and embroidering, work in retail department store
- Provide care for sick children= could work well in health-related helping profession, such as CNA.
- Handled family's finances and paid bills=skill in financial record keeping.
- Helped child sell girl scout cookies= sales experience.
- Answered family telephone and took messages= good communication skills, potential as a telemarketer.

It is important to note that this list is certainly not all-encompassing. There are many things that women do on a daily basis that prepare them for jobs in the work world.

Even in negative life experiences, transferable skills can be cultivated. For example, if woman is transitioning out of an abusive relationship in which she talked her partner down from engagement and helped prevent a physical altercation, this experience could be viewed as strong communication, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution skills.

NOTE: Clients and career counselors should be careful to not make dishonest or unethical statements. There is a fine line between highlighting life experiences in a positive way and being dishonest.

You (Self Care)

The counseling profession poses a risk for emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, and burnout. As a career counselor, you must be to take care of yourself. If you are not healthy, there is no way you are going to be able to help your clients become healthy.

Stay PHYSICALLY Healthy:

- Eating three meals a day and two snacks. Do not skip meal time to squeeze in an extra client or get caught up on paper work or squeeze one more client into your schedule.
- Get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night.
- Take a multivitamin to ensure optimal health, reduce stress, and get rid of brain fog. -B vitamins help with mood, Vitamins C and D are crucial for a strong immune system.
- Avoiding using tobacco or alcohol as a stress-reliever or coping mechanism.
- Practice Graduated muscle relaxation.
- Exercise. Choose an exercise that helps the mind and body, such as yoga.

Stay MENTALLY Healthy:

- Self reflect through journaling.
- Do not take it personally if a client does not make progress or reverts back to old behaviors.
- Use positive self-talk and forgive yourself if you make a mistake.
- Attend frequent trainings to stay up to date on the research and techniques in your field so that you can be confident you are doing your job well.

Stay EMOTIONALLY Healthy:

- See a mental health counselor. You can't help others become healthy, if you yourself are not healthy.
- Consult with other helping professionals. By providing yourself with an accountability partner, you can feel confident in your helping job.
- Do not worry about things that you cannot control.

Stay SPIRITUALLY Healthy:

- Take time for prayer or meditation.
- Listen to soothing and inspiring music.
- Use mantras to help you remain calm and in the here and now.

Zeal

This last page of the *A to Z Guide to Helping Women Transition Out of Poverty and Violence* is designed to ignite passion inside of you and remind you that you are awesome!

Sometimes it is difficult to have zeal for your job. Career counselors face many challenges in helping many diverse populations. The career counseling needs of women are unique, and this population provides a set of challenges. Challenges that you are ready and capable to face!

This guide concludes by echoing the voices of some very important and inspirational people. May their words remind you to keep giving it your best. You are making a difference!

“Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”
-Theodore Roosevelt

“To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.”
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”
-Anne Frank

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”
-Mahatma Gandhi

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”
-Edward Everett Hale

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.”
-Dr. Seuss