

Effects of Participation in an Online Course on Undergraduate Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy



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Introduction

- Vocational Career Development (VCD) interventions have been found to help students build career maturity and decisiveness (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Spokane & Oliver, 1983; Whiston, Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998).
- Recent research:
 - Shows that infusing calling through spirituality and vocation into career counseling could potentially foster a sense of meaning or purpose and career decision making self-efficacy (Dik & Steger, 2008).
 - Suggests that calling may have positive outcomes in career interventions (Duffy & Dik, 2013) but no conclusive outcomes yet exist (Dik & Steger, 2008).
- The current study aims to fill this gap in the literature and evaluate the effectiveness of a calling-infused intervention with undergraduate students at a private university by specifically examining career decision-making self-efficacy.
 - Career decision-making self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has the capacity or ability to successfully make career decisions (Betz et al., 2005).
 - Through a VCD, one is able to build self-efficacy to be able to make career decisions that can directly affect career outcomes.

Current Study

- Evaluate the impact of a vocational career development (VCD) online interactive course focusing on career discernment and preparation on undergraduate students' career decision-making self-efficacy.
- Hypotheses: Students who complete the online course focusing on VCD and vocational discernment content will indicate higher overall career decision-making self-efficacy than students who complete the course only focusing on VCD, who will experience higher career decision self-efficacy than those who participate in a course with neither VCD nor vocational discernment.

Participants and Procedures

Participants

- 168 (71% female) undergraduate students within their sophomore year who were enrolled in a required general class during their winter quarter were surveyed
- 129 (77% female) participants completed both pretest and posttest and were included in analysis.
- Each participant earned a small amount of class credit for completing the online course, the pretest, and the posttest.

Measures

- Participants completed a pre- and post-test survey which included the short-form version of the career decision self-efficacy scale that includes 25 items on a 5-point scale of Taylor and Bentz's (1983) original 50-item measure (CDSE-SF; Betz et al., 2005).
- Pre-test and post-test surveys were administered about 10 weeks apart.

Method

- Each student was randomly assigned to one of three online VCD groups:
 - Group 1 (ADJ): "Adjust to college only" activities
 - Group 2 (TRAD): ADJ + traditional career development activities
 - Group 3 (CALL): ADJ + TRAD + spiritual discernment activities
- Participation in each group involved completing online modules with VCD content corresponding to group condition.
- Students were given up to 10 weeks to complete their assigned modules, which were embedded in a course required before graduation by the university.

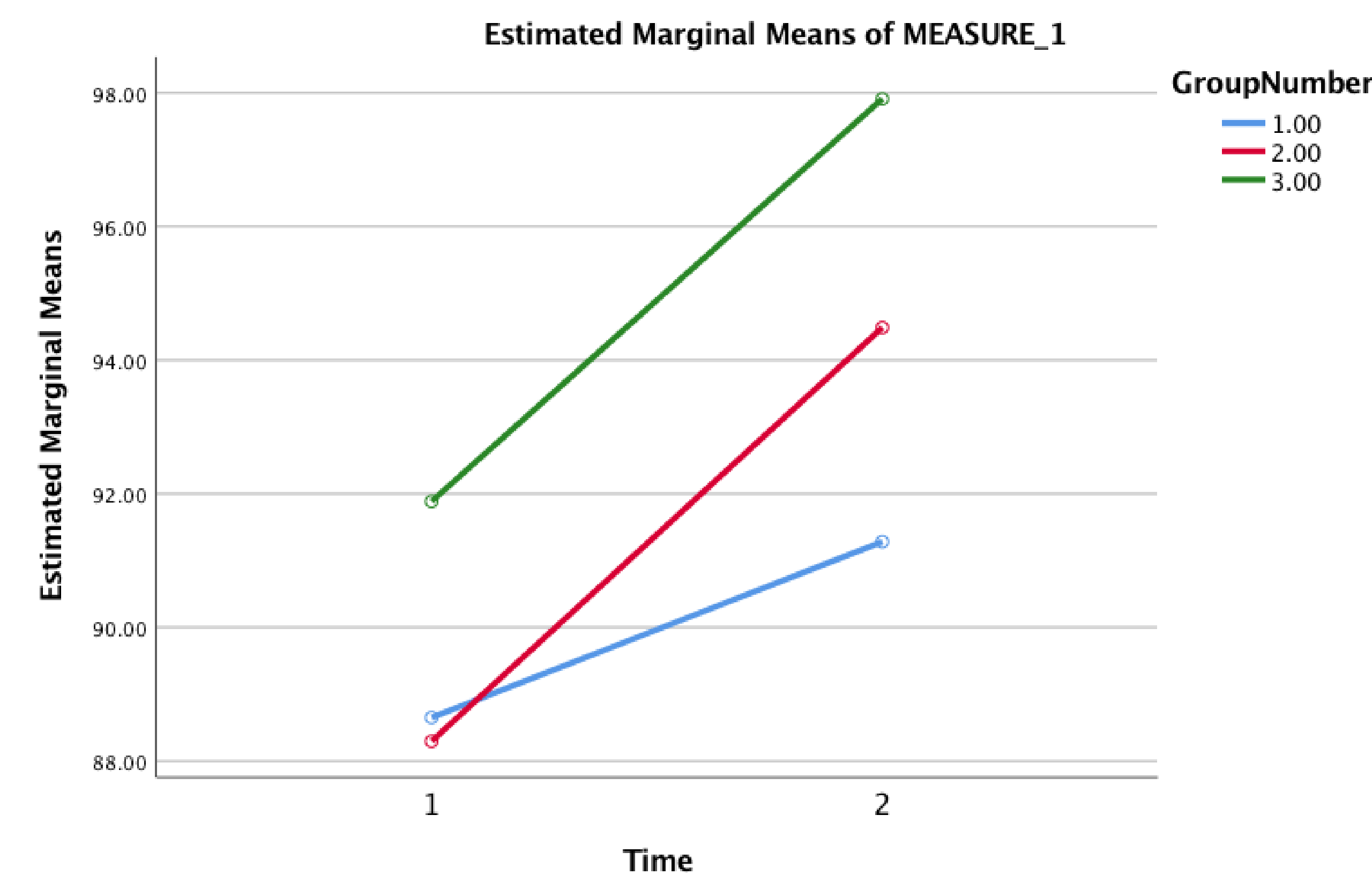
Analysis

- A 2 x 3 mixed design ANOVA was conducted to evaluate differences in career decision-making self-efficacy across pre- and post-test for the three groups.

Tables & Figures

Table 1
Means (Standard Deviations) for Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy as a Function of Time and

Group	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Group 1 (ADJ)	88.65 (17.32)	91.28 (17.27)
Group 2 (TRAD)	88.30 (14.37)	97.91 (18.64)
Group 3 (CALL)	91.89 (16.52)	94.51 (17.74)



References

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Results & Discussion

Results

- Significant main effect for time (pre-test and post-test):
 - Wilks's $\Lambda = .869$, $F(1, 124) = 18.623$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$
- Non-significant main effect for group:
 - $F(2, 124) = 1.162$, $p = .316$, partial $\eta^2 = .018$
- Non-significant interaction effect for time*group:
 - Wilks's $\Lambda = .983$, $F(2, 124) = 1.068$, $p = .347$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$

Conclusions:

- All participants exposed to a vocational career development online course increased significantly in career decision-making self-efficacy
- Participation in groups that included spiritual discernment or traditional vocational discernment activities was not associated with higher career decision-making self-efficacy than the group without these activities; no significant differences for group were found.

Discussion:

- Significant increases in career decision-making self-efficacy across groups suggests the potential positive impact offered by participation in any online course including activities salient to career preparation and decision-making.
- Addition of activities specifically tailored to VCD or vocational discernment may not better facilitate career decision-making self-efficacy than standard career exploration actions (e.g., meeting with advisor) alone if these activities are required or otherwise prompted.

Limitations:

- All participants exposed to materials suggesting importance of career preparation and decision-making, which may have prompted them to take steps outside of what was reflected in the modules
- All participants were asked to complete certain modules, (i.e., meet with academic advisor) which may have been especially salient in facilitating career decision-making self-efficacy.
- Normative developmental events in sophomore year, such as formally declaring a major, may have made career and major preparation more salient and prompted outside activities that affected career decision-making self-efficacy
- Sample reflective of university population (predominantly Caucasian, female)
- Did not account for percentage of assigned modules completed or relative effort put forth on assignments
- Participants assigned different numbers of modules to complete, with the vocational discernment + VCD group completing the most modules

Future Research

- This study represents beginning stages of research in experimentally evaluating the impact of vocational discernment and VCD activities in addition to standard career-relevant activities. Much more research is needed to replicate and further explicate these relations.
- Further research evaluating the effects of participation in the conditions in this study is needed to evaluate this trend in other years (i.e., freshmen, juniors, seniors)
- Percentage of assigned work completed and relative effort put into assignments may be important to consider in evaluating effects of each group on career decision-making self-efficacy
- Future research on the effectiveness of participation should be extended to more diverse populations, including low SES or underserved populations, for whom these activities may have an even more substantial impact