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The Effect of a Study Strategy Group on Self-Efficacy

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The Effect of a Study Strategy Group on Self-Efficacy

by

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A Thesis

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effect of a psycho-educational group that teaches study strategies and supports perceived self-efficacy among college students. The study followed a within-group, pre-experimental design, with a pretest/posttest evaluation measuring quantitative data of perceived self-efficacy, as well as a demographic questionnaire. An instrument with high reliability was used to measure self-efficacy on two college students in an open group promoting inclusion of a diverse population. It was estimated that self-efficacy would increase after a total of six one-hour group counseling sessions were attended. Results showed improvement, however were statistically insignificant due largely to a low sample size.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

While colleges are filled with opportunities for students to find support from many different sources, some students struggle to find an academic self-concept (how they perceive themselves as a student as a whole) that helps them learn and practice the necessary academic requirements to be successful in college. Despite there being many supports on college campuses, students are still struggling and it is unclear why. One particular element of self-concept is the ability to believe that one is capable of particular tasks, known as self-efficacy. It has been well documented that self-efficacy is an important element to success in college (Bandura, 1997; Eisenberger, Conti-D'Antonio, & Bertrando, 2000; Schunk & Miller, 2002), but establishing an evidence-based way to generate self-efficacy in students remains a challenge for educators.

Two factors identified as positive predictors for success in college are developed competence, especially with skills to comprehend and synthesize information (Harper, Wilson, & Associates, 2010), and managing emotions, especially through social engagement (Harper, Wilson, & Associates, 2010). First, having adequate competence means that as students move through the process of applications, admissions, attendance, homework, exams, and seeking employment, the ability to manage time and stay organized is ever important. Not only do they need to know the content of their courses but manage the process in which that content is learned. Second, in order for a student to find emotional fulfillment in college one needs to believe that one can succeed there. This means that one needs to believe that one can handle emotional challenges by understanding emotional intelligence, or the capacity to be aware of emotions. New strategies for how to develop emotional intelligence as a medium

to understanding emotions are currently being developed (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012) and these attempts involve interpersonal interaction with a peer group. A social peer group is one of the most positive predictors of student success whether it is a relationship with a study partner, a counselor, an athletic teammate, a faculty member, or student organization (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Some engagement with academically encouraging peers increases the chance of coping with challenges in developing competence and managing emotions.

It cannot be assumed that students attend college knowing all of the skills they need to be successful. The changing demographics of those attending college means skill-sets of today's students are changing too (Borden & Evenbeck, 2007). For example, some students are the first generation in their families to attend college and never learned how to effectively manage a work schedule with self-guided study time. Another example of this may be those who lack the skills of how to communicate with a professor through email. Luckily colleges have been learning more about the missing gaps in skills and have provided programs to encourage students to learn them (Taylor & Baker, 2012). Despite improvements in meeting the needs of people in this area, some students still struggle to acquire necessary skills to properly manage time and stay organized. Understanding the process of schooling, making time to do homework or attend class, are skills that are not specifically a part of most course curriculum and could be learned through other student support programs. However, while learning these skills is difficult enough on top of the course content, doing so among a group of peers requires additional management of the interpersonal relationships that come along with it.

The idea that what one knows is a reflection of what they are capable of is a matter of potential. Educators and theorists have long understood that encouraging academic growth is not only a matter of telling students facts and helping them commit them to memory or walking them through a process. It is also about helping students gain the confidence in themselves that they are capable of achieving what is expected of them. Theorists tease apart the elements of the learner's mind to better understand what it is that gives a person the drive and motivation to succeed. Central to the idea that learning is made up of several elements including, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined here as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Unlike self-esteem self-efficacy is measurable as a cognitive belief and unlike self-confidence it is domain specific, meaning it is not a general reflection of one's belief, but relates specifically to individual tasks. For this reason, and others which will be discussed below, self-efficacy is a standard of measure that has been used to predict an individual's success at specific tasks. How we build self-efficacy however involves both rational and emotional growth. What is more, in order for self-efficacy to be grown, it relies on personal and interpersonal approval.

What has already been mentioned is that self-efficacy has been accepted as an important element to one's success. However, if it is not acquired simply by working through secondary school, then students cannot be assumed to unintentionally acquire it in a post-secondary education. Efforts are being made to intentionally instill self-efficacy into students who may not have organically acquired it earlier.

Therapeutic groups have long been known to be effective ways for people to connect interpersonally with others, and research has shown that academically focused support groups encourage positive student outcomes (Parcover, Dunton, Gehlert, & Mitchell, 2006). These groups are able to combine both a teaching environment for establishing missing skills such as time management and organizational strategies, as well as promote social connection with a like group of peers. Part of the reason social engagement promotes positive outcomes is that it promotes an emotional intelligence that allows students the opportunity to engage with peers who work through similar struggles (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Students who observe others dealing with emotional issues relating to academics, and those who seek support of their own, learn coping strategies to manage the stresses of interpersonal relationships with classmates, teachers, administrations, as well as future employers. It has been argued that traditional models of passive lecture style teaching do not promote the dialogue required between people to teach emotional intelligence that students need to be successful (Park, 2000). While the effectiveness of these groups has been established, they are often underutilized on college campuses (Parcover et al., 2006).

The combination of extracurricular groups that teach study strategies for groups of students is not a new concept (Taylor & Baker, 2012). However, the apparent success of these programs begs the question why they are not put into use more? It is not the intention of this project to answer that question but to build on the body of evidence that promotes the use of group dynamics to teach academic skills to students.

The purpose of this project was to run a psycho-educational group to teach study strategies and support perceived self-efficacy among college students. It was an attempt to

combine elements of other successful programs in a way that meets the needs of a new demographic of students in order to increase self-efficacy. The research question then is: Does a psycho-educational group that teaches study skills through interpersonal relationships to college students' increases self-efficacy. I hypothesize that self-efficacy will increase with a minimum of six sessions in the psycho-educational group.

For the purposes of this study, operational definitions of variables are as follows:

Psycho-educational Group: A group focused on developing student's academic study skills and emotional interpersonal skills through structured group meetings intended to allow time for instruction and practice.

Study Strategies: Skills required to manage the classroom environment and the process of learning academic content. These include the topics of: time management, note-taking, paying attention, procrastination, motivation, networking, stress management, textbook reading, keeping a task list, and reviewing before tests.

Self-efficacy: Defined here as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much work has been done to establish the importance of both attaining competency in skills and managing the emotional challenges that college presents. However, as college demographics change to include and expanding group of individuals who identify in vastly different ways, the methods colleges use to promote growth in the ways that are important to the individual must change as well. Colleges traditionally promote a diverse array of services to attempt to meet the needs of all students, but they have yet to prove effective. As Tinto (2012) explains, “Over the past twenty years, if not more, colleges and universities as well as foundations, state governments, and more recently the federal government have invested considerable resources in the development and implementation of a range of retention programs, many directed specifically at low-income and underserved students” (Tinto, 2012). Yet, student retention remains low, particularly for first year students. Tinto believes “the classroom is the building block upon which student retention is build and the pivot around which institutional action for student retention must be organized” (Tinto, 2012, p. 124). This includes building support, especially for first year students, to better manage the competency and emotional expectations of the college classroom. In order to establish this, we must begin by understanding the identity development of the student. This includes the importance of building an identity in relation to others, the predictive factors of self-efficacy on student success, and emotional regulation through supportive involvement. Following this will be a discussion of the psychoeducational group and the elements in which this structure supports both the development of competency and emotion management.

Student Identity Development through Relationships

According to Richard Kadison, M.D., the chief of Harvard's Mental Health Services, college is a time of normal identity development for students (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). The pressure to adapt to a new environment with new people can produce challenges that are non-academic, but very much a part of college life. Just as Kadison argues that the number of people who are dealing with these interpersonal challenges (who I am and how I relate to other people) is increasing, the number of people who are struggling in college is also on the rise. The important thing to note is that while college is a time of academic learning, it does not happen in a vacuum; individual success depends greatly on interpersonal relationships with others. In addition to that, the range of diversity in collegial peers has potential to either undermine or strengthen an individual's sense of self. This challenge put into the context of the mental health field demonstrates the dire nature of establishing an identity and creating positive relationships in times of transition.

The importance of building an identity is not only a normal stage of development, it is also a requirement of effective healing when our brain physiology has gone awry. Students who enter college without the necessary emotional or social skills due to mental health issues are not considered to be in normal development, but according to National Institute on Mental Illness (NAMI) this particular demographic is on the rise (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). These students, despite the presence of mental illness, are in a similar situation as mentally healthy students in that the recipe for healing and developing is the same: build competency skills in an interpersonal way. In his research on trauma experiences and healing mental health issues, Wilder (2014) argues:

the brain does not reach stability from the absence of pain but rather from the presence of an identity that knows how to suffer well and remain relational. ... Once reality [in this case, self-concept] becomes a shared reality with a caring other we begin to answer the question of what it is like to be, feel and do... (p. 5)

Students face a variety of stressors in college, as well as opportunities to change their own vision of the way that they see themselves. In order to create a fertile learning environment, they not only need to build and maintain the proper brain conditions to gather, store, and recall information, but they must do so in a context that is relational to other people. In this view, the learning potential of a person is not dependent on his own aptitude as an individual, but his aptitude and their ability to maintain an identity, as well as recover from changes in that identity, within the context of the other people they relate to around them. The way they view their own identity within this social context is important to their ultimate success in college.

Self-efficacy: Identifying the Potential of Students

This “way of seeing me” is what Bandura (1997) calls the Self-concept, or “a composite view of oneself that is presumed to be formed through direct experience and evaluations adopted from significant others” (p. 10). The terms “identity” and “self-concept” are used synonymously here, but for the purposes of clarity I will use self-concept as the way a person perceives himself. While Kadison, Bandura, and Wilder see the development of the self as one relating to the amount of perceived control one has over adapting to their environment, the availability of measurement tools and accepted use of terminology lends itself to the use of self-concept. Attempts to measure self-concept have led been a challenge however because the success of an individual in one area may not be simply due to a holistic

understanding of one's abilities. Instead, researchers have preferred the measurement of self-efficacy because it is domain specific, more accurately predicts success at a given task. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). This is important because the more self-efficacy a student has the more likely they will be to succeed in college. Bandura references studies by Pajares, Kranzler, and Miller saying that in terms of predictive power, "efficacy beliefs are highly predictive of behavior, whereas the effect of self-concept is weaker and equivocal" (1997, p. 11). In terms of the development of college students, self-efficacy will be used as a measurement of their perceived ability to accomplish tasks (study strategies) that will affect their overall success as college students.

There is one important distinction that needs to be made here. Despite self-efficacy being a belief about one's abilities, which is a cognitive entity, it is highly guided by both emotional and rational processes. The concept of self-esteem has been widely researched with regard to academics (Brown, Brown III, Beale, & Gould, 2014), however there is doubt as to whether it is a useful measure of academic success. As Eisenberger et al., note, "Well-meaning teachers confuse the lack of performance attainment with self-esteem. When this confusion arises, students' poor performance is attributed to a lack of self-esteem, when, in many cases, students actually lack self-efficacy" (2000, p. 7). Self-esteem is described as relating to: judgment of self-worth, regulating happiness, self-liking, personal accomplishment, predicts satisfaction, product of social evaluation, and produces contentment; while self-efficacy relates to judgment of personal capabilities, regulates acquisition of knowledge and skills, self-discipline, performance attainment, predicts effort

and motivation, product of reflection, and produces goal achievement (Eisenberger et al., 2000). This being said it should be reiterated that the growth or decline of self-efficacy is highly socially motivated.

Self-efficacy can change during periods of transition and even academic self-efficacy can be significantly influenced by one's peers (Schunk & Miller, 2002). Schunk and Miller describe how "adolescents may frequently reassess their self-efficacy in various subjects given this shift to normative grading among unfamiliar peers" (2002, p. 38). The concept of being assessed in a new way, with changing expectations of how to perform, in relation to peers whom one does not know can have a drastic effect on self-efficacy. This is because "the strongest vicarious influence comes from others we perceive as similar to ourselves in key characteristics... Key social sources of self-efficacy information are friends and *peer networks*, or large groups of peers with whom students associate" (Schunk & Miller, 2002, p. 39). With these facts in mind, it is not a great leap to deduce that the more positive the experience with a group of peers who are academically motivated, the more self-efficacy a person should be expected to have. For this reason, a social group that promotes both positive academic attitudes, but skill building as well, could theoretically increase self-efficacy for students. Schunk and colleagues also point out that successful interventions for building self-efficacy include goal setting, modeling (watching peers and others around), and feedback, which can all be parts of the group therapy process.

Group Counseling Approach

As a response to promoting a positive academic identity development in students, college counseling centers have attempted to support students by means of group counseling.

Group counseling has the advantage of strengthening emotional intelligence by recreating interpersonal situations in the “here-and-now” (Schneider Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2010, p. 139). This here-an-now process with college students allows students to discuss relationship challenges with classmates, faculty, security, administration, etc. in a controlled environment and get feedback on how to improve those relationships. Most importantly, this method of relational therapy is also a means to improve the way a person sees themselves in relation to other people.

The here-and-now approach was developed by Yalom (1998) and has been used to promote change in both individual and group psychotherapy. As a mode of emotional development, it can be used to fill the needs of what Chickering and Reisser (1993) call the second vector of identity development: managing emotions. Typically students go through this stage during their college years, but it has been argued that certain educational models do not support sufficient development of emotional intelligence. Park (2000) argues that dialogue within the lecture-style instructional setting is lacking in that it does not support development of student’s emotional learning.

It is through dialogue that people come to learn how others think and feel. The individual engaged in dialogue is able to continuously test out their ideas, to see how they resonate with, and differ from, those of other people. The process has the potential to engage, excite and stimulate; deepening insight as well as depth and complexity in thinking. Dialogue is a process that creates the possibility of change—intellectual and personal—because it exposes people to a full experience of others (p. 13).

Others have argued that “active lecturing” can promote the necessary interaction to be sufficient for both cognitive and emotional learning (Gregory, 2013). Regardless of why students are missing out on emotional learning, the fact remains that some students have a need and group psychotherapy is one way to fulfill it.

While the here-and-now approach can help students develop emotional learning, some students lack the necessary study strategies to successfully manage time and stay organized. These needs are not specifically met by the psychotherapy group but by a psycho-educational group (Schneider Corey et al., 2010, p. 12). This type of group can provide students with a leader to instruct them on certain strategies such as using a time schedule, a file system, or other such tools that teach “through behavioral rehearsal, skills training, and cognitive exploration” (Schneider Corey et al., 2010, p. 13). Consequently, a mixture of this instructive approach on time management and organizational strategies, as well as how learning these skills relates to interpersonal challenges, blends both cognitive and emotional learning through a dialogue interaction. The primary purpose for blending these two types of group approaches stems from the research of Chickering and Reisser in that “traditional-aged college students explore the first three vectors in their first few years of college, while upper-class students wrestle with vectors four, five, and possibly six” (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 2003). The seven vectors of student development are respectively: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Harper et al., 2010). While group therapy can aid students in the development of the last six of these seven skills, developing competence is

better learned through direct instruction, either from peers or a leader. The combination of the psychotherapy and psychoeducational group leaves open the possibility of covering all vectors of student development and provides a more holistic approach.

Study Strategies

While the interpersonal group can provide a relational structure to acquire competencies, which competencies need to be learned is up for debate. Credé and Kuncel (2008) refer a large and fragmented body of evidence that studying and learning behaviors can have as predictive of an effect on college success as measures of prior academic performance and admissions tests. However, many colleges do not assess for these skills as a prerequisite for entrance. As a consequence, students vary in their studying and learning abilities, which means that many colleges end up offering supplemental study skills supports for students whose college success may depend on them. These skills are taught in a variety of ways, but given the diverse demands for skill acquisition, a psychoeducational group is an attractive option for some students.

To provide a definition of study skills, Credé and Kuncel (2008) state that they refer “to the student’s knowledge of appropriate study strategies and methods and the ability to manage time and other resources to meet the demands of academic tasks” (p. 427). According to a study on exam taking, “73% of students start learning or actually learn with less than one week before the exam period” (Nadinloyi, Hajloo, Garamaleki, & Sadeghi, 2013, p. 135). While this can be attributed to factors other than lack of skills, the same study was able to conclude that time management skills can be trained and students can either reinforce the importance of the skills or learn them outright. In addition to the use of time

management skills, some students lack an understanding of how specifically to engage in self-directed learning with the content provided by the instructor, (i.e., notes, textbook, online materials, etc.). These skills have been demonstrated to relate directly to academic performance as a whole (Credé & Kuncel, 2008).

In short, the demographics of students attending colleges are changing faster than colleges can learn how to support them. It has been known that students grow into a new identity while in college, but new supports are required for the new types of students seeking education. If developing a self-concept depends on skills building and emotional management, then it follows that a student support must be able to meet the competency and emotional needs of a more diverse range of students. Psychoeducational groups are a method of relationally teaching both competency and emotional management skills and a predictive measure of success based on the concepts taught in this group is the self-efficacy measurement. Competency in the form of study skills are taught due to their relation to academic success as a whole.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study investigated the perceived self-efficacy of college students participating in a psychoeducational support group that teaches study strategies. The study followed a within-group, pre-experimental design, with a pretest/posttest evaluation measuring quantitative data of perceived self-efficacy, as well as a demographic questionnaire. The choice of design was influenced by two factors. First, given the challenge of attracting participants voluntarily, the expected low numbers of participants necessitated the use of a single experiment group. Second, ethical considerations of not offering a potentially beneficial intervention to interested students were problematic. For these reasons a control group was forfeited to allow the greatest possible benefit to the greatest amount of participants.

The inclusion of a demographic questionnaire was also added to establish differences in types of students by category. As stated above, the increasing diversity of demographics means that the skills and self-efficacy of students who face different challenges relating to age, culture, and ability may play a role in both the initial efficacy and the ability to improve in efficacy. The pretest/posttest design was intended to measure not only the efficacy of the intervention, but to seek correlations relating to independent variables of the student's history and present situation.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the safety on human subjects. For the purposes of this study two main requirements were met. First, the psychological safety was established by having counseling available to students if they experienced negative effects due to the group intervention. Also, supervision of the leading, a

counselor in training, was attained to ensure best practices were used to help guide students to appropriate services if they needed assistance. Second, the confidentiality of participants was ensured by using unique identifiers for each participant. To eliminate researcher bias, no individual names were kept relating to inventory documents. Instead of tracking student by name, the last four digits of their eight digit student campus ID number were used. With only the last four digits of ID, no identification of the student could be found, however these identifiers would be able to ensure that the pretest and posttest were tracked for each individual. The demographic questionnaire also included the unique identifier. These documents were separated from consent forms so they could not be matched with identifying information. All other rules and regulations regarding the IRB policies and conditions were met to the satisfaction of the IRB's standard practices.

An additional note about the primary researcher's theoretical orientation may also be important to consider. In addition to following the group model of Schneider et al. (2010) described below, the researcher also claims influence from existential psychology and experiential family therapy. With regard to existential psychology, the specific method of practice meant that the researcher attempted to work with students on authentic expression of emotion. During sessions students were asked about their comfortability with the process in relation to the instructor and to the other students. In an attempt to help them express their authentic emotions of nervousness, fear of failure, and vulnerability, the here-and-now approach was modeled by the instructor. For example, the researcher would begin sessions by thanking the students for being present and ask that they consider sharing both their strengths and weaknesses with the group.

With regard to the influences of Experiential Family Therapy, the instructor would highlight how important it was for him to address his own fears of failure and vulnerability in the classroom setting. Experiential Family Therapy seeks to establish the underlying rules about how people relate to each other. For example, in a family different members function in a healthy way if they are able to express their own emotional and intellectual needs without fear of abandonment. In a classroom setting, which is similar to a family in that there are established rules, i.e., raising your hand with questions and taking turns to speak. The way in which a student relates to others in the class and the instructor play a role in determining the ability for that student to express openly their vulnerability of not knowing information and their potential for relating to others in a positive way. An example of how this was used to instruct students would be,

It is difficult for a lot of people to ask questions in class for a lot of different reasons even though we know that asking questions can help us learn specific skills necessary to succeed. I too feel nervous sometimes to ask questions for fear that someone might make a judgment about me. Becoming comfortable in our learning means that we feel courageous enough to not worry about what other people think about us.

These theoretical influences are not necessarily required for students to learn study strategies and relate positively with others, but they are an important consideration with regard to the efficacy of the instructor.

Participants

Participants in the study are students from St. Cloud State University (SCSU) who are currently enrolled with at least once credit. This includes Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctoral, or PSEO (high school students attending for college credit) who are at least 18 years of age.

The group will be open for participants to come and go according to their own interest or schedule. Not all students attending the group will participate in research but the basic requirement for participation in research will be attending 6 non-consecutive sessions.

Another consideration about the design was the assignment of participants. As mentioned, the sample size was expected to be small, so assignment to the group was impractical. Student who sought participation were not excluded. As well as being impractical to deny students the opportunity to participate, diversity of students was encouraged to fit the needs of the community. What this means is that in order to allow for the most representative sample of the population, the group remained open to allow for the widest possible range of demographics. However, while this model threatens internal validity by allowing for greater influence on the dependent variable, it encourages greater external validity by generalizability. This will be discussed further in limitations.

Instruments

The instrument being used in the research was the Academic Self-Efficacy and for Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Appendix A). This inventory was a combination of two scales which were adapted into their present format by Rudmann (2012) and downloaded from the Irvine Valley College Website (Rudmann, 2012). Reliability data are taken from original publications of authors.

The Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning Scale created by Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons, consists of eleven questions which were not changed in present format, however the Likert scale was adapted from one to seven point scale to a 1- to 5-point scale. A

Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was performed on the original scale and was found to be highly reliable with a coefficient of .87 (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

The second part of the present scale was developed by Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) and included eight questions on a one to seven Likert scale and was taken from the original format. A coefficient alpha for this scale measured at .81 (Chemers et al., 2001).

Procedures

The intervention consisted of weekly meetings that were 1 hour long and conversation on a topic relating to study strategies. The nature of the meetings followed the group model of Schneider et al., (2010), including an introduction stage, a transition stage, a working stage, and a termination stage at the end of the semester. Additionally, each day will operate on the same theoretical foundation of an introduction (5 minutes: Introductions of new members), a transition (10 minutes: leaders introduce the topic for the week), a working time (30 minutes: conversation among members), and a termination (10 minutes: Leader summary and survey). Topics for discussion and the length of each stage during the semester are shown on a calendar in Appendix B and C.

Prior to any member's participation in the group, they were given a consent form (Appendix D), a demographic survey (Appendix E), and a self-efficacy scale. The Consent form was explained to them and a copy sent via the students personal email account. This signing of consent forms happened one of two ways, either individually with the group leader by appointment or prior to the beginning of the group session. All original copies were kept by the group leader and stored in a locked cabinet in the leader's office on the campus of St. Cloud State University. Any online documents were kept password protected on the

principle researcher's personal computer. Students were also given a flyer explaining the purpose of the group and a schedule of topics.

The planning of the schedule was based on potential student availability. During the Fall semester, the groups were held from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm to allow for more students to attend. The hope was that with the evening group hours, students would not be in class sessions and the time would not interfere with academic life. During the Spring hours, the group was changed to run from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm based on student feedback of their personal schedules. The feedback given was that the earlier time would allow for students to come after their classes and give more freedom in the evening hours.

The topics of study came from two places. The curriculum used by the Academic Learning Center faculty approved the topics of: time management, note-taking, keeping a task list, healthy living, textbook reading strategies, effective studying, and finals planning. These topics were consistent with their curriculum and best practices in the field of teach study strategies. Additional topics were chosen based on the experience of individual faculty and the expertise of the group leader, including: mindful awareness; balancing of academic and personal life in college; networking and building relationships with positive academic influences, and stress management. Additional topics included in the Spring semester included a session on understanding the group process and finding motivation. Throughout the learning process from Fall semester to Spring, more emphasis was used by the leader to help students understand the process of the group, meaning he would provide guidance on how groups are used most effectively, what the students were expected to do in session, and what the students could expect from the leader. This emphasis was partly added by

experiential understanding of student needs, as well as further instruction taken from the Schneider and colleagues (2010) text.

The conversation during the meetings surrounded study habits, perceptions of academic improvement, motivation for change in academic habits, motivation for change in lifestyle change, individual perceptions of health, changes in self-perception of stigma related to group therapy, number of sessions attended, semesters of school attended, perceived improvement related to attendance, age, student status (non-traditional, international, athlete, etc.), whether they are there voluntarily or as a requirement of another class/office, involvement in other college functions (groups, clubs, use of services like advisors or registration).

The sessions were held in the Academic Learning Center, a place to attain tutoring services, for the Fall 2014 semester and a private classroom was scheduled for the Spring 2015 semester. Both of these rooms were private during sessions so that no other students could be present during groups to protect the confidentiality of group attendance and conversation.

Students were also made aware of additional resources on campus should they want to seek them. Given the nature of the psychoeducational group, it is not likely that students should experience great emotional distress, however it was made aware that students could access free counseling services provided by the college if they chose. They also have the option of visiting tutors in the Academic Learning Center or visiting on a one-on-one basis with the leader of the group concerning any topic discussed in the group. The topics remained academic in nature and it was a part of the leader's role to maintain appropriate content of

discussion. These discussions were covered upon entry of the group. Other services that will be available to them should the need arise are Student Health Services, The Women's Center, and Campus Security, also included in the consent form.

In order to ensure the safety of students, consultation with a licensed supervisor from Counseling and Psychological Services was attained. Prior to involvement in the group, a therapist was consulted to be available to address any concerns and provide guidance to other campus and community resources. One student used the services provided by this office. In an effort to advertise to potential participants, the primary researcher reached out to other campus programs to promote participation. Relationships with these campus departments were crucial to attaining participants for the study.

The Academic Learning Center (ALC) is a support program that hires tutors for many of the campus' classes, however not all classes are offered. They hire one graduate assistant to meet with students one-on-one to assist with study skills, reading strategies, testing anxiety, time management, organization, note-taking and other non-content related skills. They also teach courses in Reading and Study Strategies as well as Power Reading. Faculty uses the support of the one-on-one assistance to proctor make-up tests. During this process students have to meet with the Graduate Assistant to talk about what led to the test not being taken the first time and if they would like to discuss strategies to prevent future occurrences. This particular Graduate Assistant is the principal researcher and is a Graduate Level student in the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at St. Cloud state University.

When students are put on Probation or Warning after filing an appeal with this office they must create an Academic Success Plan through the office of Academic Appeals and

Probation. As part of their appeal they have to describe in detail what led to their difficulties, what they are currently doing to change the circumstances of those difficulties, and what will be different in their future to ensure success. The Vice Provost in charge of the office will be writing this group project into their success plans to provide incentive for students to discover different options for support. The opportunity for involvement in the group was strong encouraged but voluntary.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free counseling services to SCSU students. They do not currently provide group-style services due to time and financial constraints. However, in discussing this option with director of the program, Dr. John Eggers, he was willing to refer students to this project to encourage other options for students to seek assistance. This has potential benefit to the students in that they may prefer the group setting and potential benefit to the department by freeing up time and energy for other students. Each individual therapist in the office was made aware of the opportunity and kept a flyer in their office to refer students.

Campus Advisor currently refers students to the ALC for tutoring services and one-one-one assistance, but they extended these referrals to the group setting as well. The FREE Program requires students to attend several workshops throughout the semester. These groups will count toward workshop participation allowing students to fulfill requirements through weekly participation.

First Year Transition Program (FYTP) is in place to support first year students in their transition to higher education. Emphasis is placed on academic performance. When an at-risk student is identified, intervention by FYTP staff is put into place requiring meetings with an

FYTP advisor depending on the specific needs of students. This support group was made an available option to be included in a student's success plan.

Residential Life–Flyers will be placed with each Residential hall and all Resident Directors (RD) and Community Advisors (CA) were made aware of the weekly sessions. The RD position is a professional position held by a Masters level employee of the college and the Community Advisor role were held by student employed by the school to over-see a particular hall. In addition to personal contact with these positions, the Director of residential life was made aware of the opportunity and other Graduate Assistants were also in close collaboration with the researcher to send students who may be deemed at risk by Residential Life Staff. In addition, outreach through the Residential Life Facebook page will help student become aware of this opportunity.

Multi-Cultural Student Services was contacted to promote the opportunity to students, particularly students who may be less aware of American campus supports.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender office is a campus support to promote inclusion and opportunity to the community of students who identify with a non-heterosexual orientation. The director of the program was made aware of the opportunity and a relationship was formed with a particular Graduate Assistant to help refer students.

The Director of Online Learning has agreed to post information for online students on D2L (the online portal students use to communicate with professors in their individual classes) and send information regarding the services of the group. Emails inviting participants were also forwarded to Online Students. Only students who can be present on campus will be able to attend the group.

Flyers were placed at the front desk of Disability Services and be given to students as they visit the office. All staff, including Graduate Assistants and Work Study were informed of the purpose of the project and encouraged to refer students.

Results

The intervention was run for all of the Fall 2014 semester and six sessions during the Spring 2015 semester. While there was a considerable amount of interest in the program expressed upon announcement, actual participation was low in students. There were 12 total students who participated in the group and of that, six participated in the pretest. Of those six who attended at least once, two students attended the required six interventions and completed the posttest to supply complete data for the intervention. The following demographic information was collected on those two individuals.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Demographics	(n)
Age	
17	1
39	1
Sex	
Male	1
Female	1
Race	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	
Asian or Asian American	
Black or African American	1
Hispanic or Latino	
Non-Hispanic White	1
Year in School	
1 st year of college	1
3 rd year of college	1
Hours of Study Per Week	
1 – 2	
3 - 5	
6 – 8	1
9 - 12	
13 – 15	1
Is English your 1 st Language	
Yes	1
No	1
Are you a Non-Traditional Student*	
Yes	1
No	1
Are you involved in the ACE Program**	
Yes	
No	2
Are you Registered with Disability Services	
Yes	1
No	1

Note. *(part time student, work more than 35 hrs/wk, financially independent, have children or dependents, did not immediately attend college after high school).***(ACE program is specific to students who are conditionally approved to the university based on standardized test scores or high school performance.)

In order to ensure accurate use of the survey, reliability was tested for the instrument to compare to original number with the developers. The current instrument was actually a combination of two separate scales that were kept separate to encourage integrity of the data. The initial scale is referred to “self-efficacy for self-regulated learning” (Zimmerman et al., 1992). Based on the scores of the two individuals, a Cronbach’s alpha of .855 was found for the pretest and -.2444 for the posttest. The .855 alpha on the pretest were consistent with the developer’s alpha of .87, however the posttest alpha performed of -.2444 means there is an inconsistency. It is likely this was due to the low sample size.

The second part of the instrument used is here referred to the self-regulated learning scale, which is the title given by the designer of the scale (Rudmann, 2012). In a 2006 progress report, reliability data was collected on this portion of the instrument and the Cronbach’s Alpha was .90. This is compared to the present results for the pre and posttest which were .956 and .84 respectively. Due to the acceptable reliability of these two measures on past applications, the instrument was determined to be suited for this project.

For the two participants that completed the study, a paired t-test was performed to assess self-efficacy. With a mean score of 74.5 on the pretest and a mean score of 89 on the posttest, the mean increase of self-efficacy after six sessions was 14.5. With a p of .304, which is in the range of $p < .05$, the results of the test were statistically insignificant.

Discussion

Due to the lack of participation in the intervention and the low sample size, it comes as no surprise that the statistical results showed no significance. However, these numbers do not outweigh the anecdotal benefits of the study. Students reported that they found benefit to the

information given the support of the group. Students reported different goals for which they were attending and different outcomes. These differences in life situation and demographics played an important role in the group dynamics.

The regular members of the group were very diverse. The age range of the members was from age 19 to 37, included three different race categories, and a range of already acquired study skills. The two participants who completed the study represent the widest range of age and ability, yet both found benefit which will be discussed below.

The other students who did not participate in the required six sessions of the intervention would comment on the benefit of the topics and claim to find them helpful, but did not comment on their own self-efficacy with regard to the topics. Possibilities of why this may be are: low group cohesion, reluctance of disclosure, and non-applicability of material. However, these are speculations that were not confirmed by quantitative data or anecdotal evidence. While there was low participation in the group interventions, students would still regularly attend individual sessions with the group leader during school hours. The individual sessions appeared to be of greater benefit to the students based on regular attendance.

Due to the low statistical significance of the data, it may be beneficial to provide a brief overview of the two students involved in the study. These descriptive cases may provide more insight into the diversity of need and circumstances for which students sought support. While the numbers do not provide insight into the benefits of the study for the individual participants, some trends were noticed given the individual gains achieved.

Student Case Study: Number One. The first student was a 37 year old Caucasian male with a history of psychiatric disorders and learning disabilities. He entered the group eager to participate in any supports he could find and was already engaged in individual consultations with the group leader for help with time management, organization, textbook reading, study methods, comprehension improvement, and motivation. He was registered for disability services and was using those supports. He also reported having a long-term partner who provides support at home. He reports studying between 6 and 8 hours per week. His greatest barriers were an anxiety disorder which rendered him prone to becoming overwhelmed when he believed that a project was above his ability level, a history academic weakness, and a self-perceived disadvantage due to his age and social ability to engage with his peers. Despite these challenges, he had a strong ability to remember historical details and facts. Much of the individual interaction with him was focused on a strengths-based approach that worked to enhance his ability to be confident in the skills that he did have so that he would not become so anxious that he would stop working on projects even if he was capable of completing them. In essence, working to increase self-efficacy in his ability to accomplish tasks made him a perfect fit for the group.

In addition to the individual goals that were established with him, the group provided him a social outlet to meet other students who desired similar motivational assistance. The group setting for him allowed him to make comments like, “I was never taught this stuff in school.” Due to his unique circumstances of age and ability, the primary focus of the group leader was to highlight the similarities between him and other participants. The intention of this was create relational bonds between him and others so that growth in confidence and

efficacy was perceived as a manageable goal with attainable outcomes. One of his most common sayings upon closing sessions was, “I wish I would have known about this earlier” and “I wish other people would know about stuff like this.”

His range of scores consisted of a raw score of 62 on the pretest and 78 on the posttest. There were two trends worth highlighting on his individual scores. First, on the self-efficacy portion of the scale he improved in four separate categories from having “very little confidence” to having “some confidence” in each of them. Second, in the self-regulation portion of the scale he ranged from scores of 2 to 5 on the pretest to a range of 4 to 6 on the posttest. This outcome suggests a consistent increase in his belief in the ability individually perform academic tasks without support. It is the opinion of this author that due to his significant levels of anxiety surrounding the need for external support, the improvements suggest more resilience in following through with a task individually.

Student Case Study: Number Two. The second student was a 17-year-old African American student who does not identify with any disability and is a first-year student. She reports having a stable family life, thriving friendships, and studies between 13 and 15 hours per week. However, even though she reports much social support, she stated that her “friends don’t discuss academic issues.” Her main interest in the group was to discuss stresses surrounding assignments and difficulty in managing group work. She reports getting good grades, but prefers individual work over group work because of her lack of patience with less motivated students. Due to her first year status, she was experiencing adjustment challenges common to students transitioning to college life. The group provided her with the opportunity

meet other students who were at different ability levels and practice working with them and not disengaging when topics strayed from experience that was relevant to her.

While she was able to pick up on the skills portion of the intervention, the challenge was posed to her that much college life, and arguably human experience, is to remain relational to others despite significant differences in ability and motivation. During one particular session, the group leader moved from talking with her about her assignment and the frustrations with other non-motivated group members to asking her how she perceived other members of this group. The group then explored what appropriate expectations were in group assignments including the instructor and each individual member. Upon reflection of the similarities in her patterned behavior of disengagement during group work she responded in the next session by stating that she was able to successfully complete her group assignment by establishing more clear expectations with her group members.

Her scores on the instrument did not provide significant insight into her increase in self-efficacy or self-regulated learning, however a raw score improvement of 87 to 94 was noted. This does not come as a surprise since she scored high in the pretest on self-efficacy to begin with. The major improvement in this case was not in self-efficacy in individual tasks, but in emotional regulation in relation to others who may not meet her standards. The success still does not overshadow the improvements in the use of skills presented and the overall efficacy increase.

Table 2

Raw Data Table

Student	Overall Pretest	Overall Posttest	Self- Efficacy Pretest	Self- Efficacy Posttest	Self- Regulated Learning Pretest	Self- Regulated Learning Posttest
Student one	62	78	33	37	29	41
Student two	87	94	44	46	43	48

Organizational consideration. The departments who were presented with this opportunity showed great interest and expressed the “need for these kinds of programs,” yet the low attendance rate suggested that either students did not recognize the need for such a program or the message did not reach them that it was available. Other reasons may contribute to the low attendance: busy schedules, high perceived efficacy regardless of actual performance, or having priorities not related to academic success. During the promotion of the group, other departments expressed that one of the main challenges in getting students to participate is difficulty in communicating the availability with students. As discussed earlier, the demands placed on students can vary greatly depending on not only their academic goals, intensity of programs, or personal academic habits, but also their lifestyle outside of the classroom, demands placed on them by families or work, and a host of other distractions can keep them from knowing about such opportunities. The opinion of this author is that the greatest benefit to acquiring students was personal recommendations of faculty, staff, and friends of attendees.

The actual intervention took place in a private classroom and closely followed the structure of group counseling as described earlier by Schneider Corey et al. (2010). The group leader would begin by welcoming new members and have returning members share a little bit about their experience. The choice of what to share, whether they wanted to share their classes, just their name, or their experience of the group, was left up to them. The instructor would also share the objectives of the group and remind students of confidentiality. The group leader would then move into the psychoeducational portion of the group. The group leader would open this conversation by sharing his progression of learning these skills and how he came to use them. An example would be,

There was a time in my life where I too struggled to keep good notes and I would learn them by thinking how I took notes at the time and what other people were doing. It is a process of figuring out where changing my strategies for learning could be improved and what specific skills I could try to make them better.

Students were encouraged to ask questions or interject with experiences or challenges relating to the topic. After the instructional period was over, the group was opened up to discuss the topic. As mentioned earlier, there was usually a fair amount of hesitation and in these instances the group leader would open up the group with a specific open question to encourage people to share their experience. An example of an open question would be, “Is anyone willing to share how they have been nervous about walking into class on the first day?” After the discussion was done, the group leader would make a summary statement on what was covered and comment on the specific discussion during the group. A common summary was something like, “It sounds like several of us have changed the way in which we

use our textbooks and have some good ideas to make even better use of the resources in it.”

Final comments were made about the following group and what would be covered.

As expected, there were challenges in getting students to engage each other in the group meetings. A particularly helpful technique in getting students to engage with each other would be periodically reinforcing the common experience between members to help them see how their specific challenge mirror others’. “John, when you talk about how your mind would go blank when you were nervous, it sounds a lot like what Jane experiences before her tests. Did you hear anything else in what she said that sounds similar to her testing experiences?” These comments helped get the students involved in discussion with each other instead of just reporting to the group leader. This technique was used to help the students relate to one another instead of seeking advice or approval from the group leader. However, students still struggled to relate experiences with other members.

Despite these challenges, students reported that the specific techniques learned did have an effect on their habits and practices. When asked how the previous topics were benefiting them, students were able to directly address what was going well with them and what gains they had made. They were also given the opportunity to discuss what was not working for them, however they had a harder time discussing challenges specifically relating to the topics presented. Usually it was comments on specific stressors relating to classes or other individuals that were addressed. While these comments were of interest to the researcher, the primary interest of the study was self-efficacy and questions were tailored to how the students believed they could accomplish the specific study habits discussed.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Summary

While similar groups have been established on other campuses and proven to be effective, several limitations to the process threaten its own efficacy. First, the inexperience of a group leader can have an effect on the individual benefits that students perceive. The ability to build trust within a short time period is essential for students to believe that the leader and members can either have something to teach them or that they are interested in having them participate. An inexperienced leader may not know the skills to draw people out with enough time for them to do the real work within the group time period. Second, maturation, the process of students improving due to the natural course of their academic life, may skew the results of a self-perception scale. The flexibility of leaving this group open for new members to join is an attempt to measure student perceptions at any grade-level or developmental stage to account for the possibility for maturation, such as the first-year experience or pre-graduation preparation. Third, the decision to leave the group open has its benefits, but it may also impede full disclosure of participants since there may be new people coming and going. Students will be asked to agree to eight sessions in order to maintain a core group of people so that trust may be established as much as possible and provide accurate data.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the study was the low number of participants. This limited sample size reduces the generalizability to a general student population. The low sample size also created problems with statistical measures of the reliability of the instruments. It is

suspected that with a greater sample size the alpha numbers would match those of previous statistics.

Threats to the internal validity of the measures were difficult to control given the choices of the open group a diverse array of students. Maturation of students through the normal progression of the semester was particularly relevant to first-year students whose normal assimilation to college may account for some of the increase in self-efficacy. Also, mortality of members who would not participate in the required six sessions accounts for the low sample size.

A particular threat to the external validity of the group was leader experience. The group was led by a novice master's level student. While the leader had experience in both teaching, effective study strategies, and counseling, the efficacy of the leader and the client/counselor relationship may have played a significant role in the overall increase, or lack thereof, of self-efficacy in students. While specific techniques were practiced and a standard evidence-based structure was used, the presentation of the counselor and specific skill in engaging with the students may leave open the possibility that students could prefer a different method of instruction and practice.

Benefits

While these limitations introduce challenges to the research process, the benefits are plentiful. First, spending more time in learning environments absorbing more information has the advantage of creating more opportunities for students to learn. The skills and strategies learned in this group open up possibilities to improve on how much information students can manage as well as how much time. In this way, these skills and strategies can be seen as a

catalyst for learning at a higher level than present, not just adding information for its own sake. When a person believes that she is more capable, she is more likely to be happier, thus improving the emotional health and overall quality of life of the individual. Second, interaction with peers who may potentially be in similar situations can create relationships between students that extend their support network beyond the educational arena and into their personal life. Third, interpersonal relationships may improve within the lives of participants beyond the academic setting.

Recommendations

The final and perhaps most glaring question regarding this research is what benefit this has on the field? The answer to this question is simply that a model of including both an educational and emotional component to a learning environment may produce students who see themselves as more capable and confident. Despite efforts in colleges to provide counseling for students to maintain their emotional and mental health, this research asks the question of whether this emotional learning would be best learned simultaneously with skill building. More research would need to be done with a specific model that integrates the two, perhaps within a classroom environment. A longer case study over the career of students would also provide data on the overall improvement of students who participate in such groups. However, offering the service to students who wish to take control over their academic fate provides them with unique opportunities to improve as students, while at the same time providing information to others on what benefits such a group setting may have. This study is intended to investigate opportunities for students that involve low risk and high reward for those that desire to improve both as students and as people.

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Appendix A

Self-efficacy Scale

Academic Self-Efficacy and Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning

(Adapted from Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001)

Please type the last four digits of your SCSU ID: _____

Directions: Please indicate how much confidence you have that you could successfully accomplish each of these tasks. Circle the number according to the following 5-point confidence scale.

		<i>Confidence Scale:</i>				
No Confidence at all	Very little confidence	Some Confidence	Much Confidence	Complete Confidence		
1	2	3	4	5		
How much confidence do you have that you can successfully:						
1	Finish homework assignments by deadlines?	1	2	3	4	5
2	Study when there are other interesting things to do?	1	2	3	4	5
3	Concentrate on school subjects?	1	2	3	4	5
4	Take class notes of class instruction?	1	2	3	4	5
5	Use the library to get information for class assignments?	1	2	3	4	5
6	Plan your schoolwork?	1	2	3	4	5
7	Organize your schoolwork?	1	2	3	4	5
8	Remember information presented in class and textbooks?	1	2	3	4	5
9	Arrange a place to study without distractions?	1	2	3	4	5
10	Motivate yourself to do schoolwork?	1	2	3	4	5
11	Participate in class discussions?	1	2	3	4	5

Directions: Please use the scale below to respond to the following 8 items.

<i>Very Untrue</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>Very True</i>
___	12	I know how to schedule my time to accomplish my tasks.					
___	13	I know how to take notes.					
___	14	I know how to study to perform well on tests.					
___	15	I am good at research and writing papers.					
___	16	I am a very good student.					
___	17	I usually do very well in school and at academic tasks.					
___	18	I find my academic work interesting and absorbing.					
___	19	I am very capable of succeeding at this college.					

Appendix B

Schedule for Fall Semester

Study Strategies Support Group Topic Calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AUG	Classes begin 25	26	27 Understanding the Group Process	28	29
	¹ Labor No Classes; Offices closed	2	3 Time Management Techniques	4	5
SEPTEMBER	8	9	10 Note-taking – Staying focused in class	11	12
	15	16	17 Paying Attention – Mindful awareness	18	19
	22	23	24 How to keep a task list	25	26
	29	30	1 Healthy living – eat, sleep, and exercise	2	3
	6	7	8 NO GROUP	9 Fall Break No classes	10 Fall Break No classes
OCTOBER	13	14	15 Making the most of required readings	16	17
	20	21	22 What does it mean to study?	23	24
	27	28	29 How much of college is really about school?	30	31
	3	4	5 Why who you know is as important as who you don't?	6	7
NOVEMBER	10	11	12 The final push and stress management	13	14
	17	18	19 Preparing for Finals	20	21
	24	25	26 NO GROUP	27 Thanksgiving Break	28 Thanksgiving Break
	1	2	3 Study Techniques for Finals	4	5
DECEMBER	8	9	10 Group Debrief	11	12 Last day of classes
	15	16	17	18	19
	FINALS				

Introduction Stage Transition Stage Working Stage Termination Stage

Appendix C

Schedule for Spring Semester

Study Strategies Support Group Calendar •Spring 2015

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
J A N U A R Y	Classes begin 12	13	14 Understanding the Group Process	15	16	17	18
	19 <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i> No classes; Offices closed Last day to drop without "W"	20	21 Time Management Techniques	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28 Note-taking – Staying focused in class	29	30	31	1
F E B R U A R Y	2	3	4 Paying Attention – Mindful awareness	5	6	7	8
	9	10	11 How to keep a task list	12	13	14	15
	16 <i>President's Day</i> Classes in session; Offices closed	17	18 Healthy living – eat, sleep, and exercise	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25 Making the most of required readings	26	27	28	1
M A R C H	2	3	4 What does it mean to study?	5	6	7	8
	9 SPRING BREAK	10	11 No Group	12	13	14	15
	16	17	18 How much of college is really about school?	19	20	21	22
	23	24	25 Why who you don't know is as important as who you?	26	27	28	29
A P R I L	30	31	1 Finding motivation	2	3 <i>Faculty Duty Day</i> No classes	4	5
	6	7	8 The final push and stress management	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15 Study Techniques for Finals	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22 Finals Stress Relief and study prep	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29 Group Debrief	30	1 Last day of classes	2	3
M A Y	4 FINAL EXAMS	5	6	7	8	9	10
			No Group				

Introduction Stage Transition Stage Working Stage Termination Stage

Appendix D

Consent for Research Participation

Informed Consent for Group Participants

Academic Support group to Build Self-Efficacy

You are invited - To participate in a group on the effect of Academic Support Groups on Self-Efficacy. The purpose of this document is to inform you of important aspects of the group and, upon signing, is an agreement that you wish to participate.

Procedure - If you agree to participate you are agreeing to attend *at least* 6 sessions over the course of the semester. You will also be asked to fill out an Academic Self-Efficacy form at your first session and after the sixth session. The groups will be held every **Wednesday at 6:00pm** for the entire semester. The only *exceptions* will be October 8th before Fall Break and November 26th before Thanksgiving. You will not be required to bring anything with you, but something to write with and on may be helpful.

Benefits - Research indicates that simply by participating in ANYTHING outside of class work you have a higher likelihood of success. That means that if you see your advisor, talk with your professors, or take advantage of tutoring you are more likely to succeed than those who don't. If you are reading this you are already more likely to do better in college and the more you engage in this group, the more you will get out of it. It is designed to be as helpful as you want it to be. Here you will have the opportunity to not only do what you can to increase your grades, but to have an overall better college experience.

Risks - We all find college difficult at times and that can have a large effect on how we feel about ourselves and others. It is entirely possible, and welcomed, that members will discuss the challenges that they face in college. While you will never be forced to discuss those challenges, you will be asked to address your personal and academic habits. This can be a difficult thing both to do and hear. Additional Counseling is available at the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) center for assistance beyond the purview of this project.

Participants - This group is considered open for people to come and go, which means that new members may be added, as well as other Counseling students or faculty to share in the learning. Members will be informed of the importance of confidentiality prior to participation.

Confidentiality - Any information gathered by Aaron will be kept under lock within the possession of Aaron Mertes. Your names or any identifying information will NOT be kept. For the purposes of organization, a number will be assigned to your information. After you fill out the questionnaires there will be no way to know which information is yours.

Results - After completing the study, the final group results will be obtainable by emailing Aaron at meaa1101@stcloudstate.edu.

Additional Resources -

- If you are experiencing considerable emotional or intellectual distress, please know that Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free counseling to St. Cloud State University Students. They are located in Stewart Hall 103 and can be contacted by phone. (320) 308-3171
- For additional individual Study assistance, Aaron Mertes will be available by appointment at : <https://alcga2.youcanbook.me/>
- Tutoring Services are available by visiting the Academic Learning Center on the Second Floor of Centennial hall, Rm 236. Some departments also have their own specific tutoring services. Please contact Aaron for assistance if needed.

Contact Information - If you have any questions now or later, please contact: Aaron Mertes at

Aaron Mertes – Primary Researcher
meaa1101@stcloudstate.edu
 211B Centennial Hall
 (320) 308-4997
 Academic Learning Center Graduate Assistant
alcga2@stcloudstate.edu
 To set up an appointment:
<https://alcga2.youcanbook.me/>

Dr. Amy Knopf – Faculty Advisor
 Office A-263 Education Building
 (320) 308-3209
amhebert@stcloudstate.edu

Also involved in the project are –
 Victoria Williams, Dr. Trae K.E.
 Downing, and Dr. Brad Kuhlman

Voluntary Participation - Participation in this research project is voluntary. If at any time you wish to withdraw either the group or the research portion of it, you are free to do so. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Risks - Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information above, and you give your consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty after signing this form.

Printed name

Signature

Date

Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire

Last four digits of you SCSU ID number: _____

What is your age? _____

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Other

Race/ethnicity (please check the one option that best describes you)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic White

What year are you in school?

- 1st year of college
- 2nd year of college
- 3rd year of college
- 4th year of college
- 5th year of college
- Graduate School
- Graduate School (doctoral program)

How many hours per week do you spend in on homework outside of class?

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 - 8
- 9 - 12
- 13 - 15

Is English your first language?

- Yes
- No

Are you a non-traditional student? (part-time student, work more than 35 hrs/wk, financially independent, have children or dependents, did not immediately attend college after high school)

- Yes
- No

Are you or were you involved in the ACE program?

- Yes
- No

Are you registered with Student Disability Services?

- Yes
- No