Young Women Who Are Doing Well with Changes Affecting Their Work: Helping and Hindering Factors

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Abstract

This study responds to a call for an increased understanding of women workers and the importance of considering women's experiences at different ages and stages of career involvement. Informed by positive psychology, this research looked at a small sub-set of working individuals, young women who self-identified as doing well with changes affecting their work. The study focused on their experience of change, what strategies helped or hindered these young women in doing well, and what would have helped within the context of volatile and changing work conditions. The article describes the participants' views regarding what change meant to them, along with the impact and result of changes they had experienced. Using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique methodology (ECIT), the 10 participants reported a total of 147 helping and hindering, and wish list items. These break down into 85 helping incidents (58% of the total), 37 hindering incidents (25%), and 25 wish list items (17%) that were best represented by 9 categories: Friends and Family, Management and Work Environment, Skills Training and Self Growth, Personality Traits and Attitudes, Self-care, Personal Boundaries/Self Awareness, Take Action, School Pressure/Workload and Personal Change/Stressful Events. Implications for research, counselling practice and career counselling are discussed.

This study arose from recent research conducted at the University of British Columbia on the impact of change on workers in the context of volatile and changing working situations (Borgen, Butterfield & Amundson, 2010; Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Erlebach, 2010; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). There were hints in these studies that young women aged 19-29 may be handling changes differently and may have a different attitude and mindset from the other age groups but there was not enough data to analyze (Butterfield et al., 2010).

Change is occurring in the North American economy at accelerated rates, mainly due to technology and the information revolution (Parent & Levitt, 2009; Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg, & Sikora, 2008). Work environments are unstable and unpredictable. In addition to workplace changes there are personal, societal, familial and governmental changes impacting workers (Butterfield et al., 2010; Fouad, 2007; Schultheiss, 2006). Research indicates that the majority of workers are struggling in the face of ongoing and escalating change and that there is a large cost associated with this in terms of increasing absenteeism, disability rates and decreased productivity for workers and companies (Bender & Farvolden, 2008; Grant, 2008). The result of these struggles is often mental health issues such as high levels of depression and stress, which can culminate in burn-out (Bender & Farvolden, 2008; Grant, 2008).

Young adults face a steady onslaught of changes in the labour world (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006). They will need to anticipate and plan for continuing change in their career development, to be flexible and self-reliant and to expect numerous adjustments (Goodman et al., 2006). Some literature suggests that young women may be more at risk in this rapidly changing environment because young women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers and many are struggling with the work-life conflict and the reality that women still face many barriers related to work (Cocchiara & Bell, 2009; Martin-Fernandez, De los Rios & Martinez-Falero, E., 2009; Murphy, K. A. Blustein, D. L., Bohlig, A.J. & Patt, M. G., 2010). For example young women are still dealing with inequalities in pay and promotions (Clayton, Carcia & Crosby, 2010), and are more often the targets of harassment and bullying (Petitpas-Taylor, 2009). As well, young women can experience excessive work monitoring, criticism, isolation, intimidation and unrealistic targets more often than men (Hätinen, Kinnunen, Pekkonen, & Kalimo, 2007).

It was hoped this study would highlight helpful and hindering strategies used by young women for personal adaptability to change and would offer insight into the career counselling

profession to assist other young women who may not be doing as well with change. Therefore the major purpose of the current study was to explore how female workers, ages 19-29, were handling changes affecting their work. It involved recruiting and interviewing 10 women in this age range, (never interviewed before), who have experienced changes within the past six months, and who believed that they were doing well with those changes.

The literature utilized for this research came from diverse fields including the business literature, positive psychology literature, post-traumatic growth literature, stress and coping literature, transition literature and career counselling literature. While all these perspectives were explored, the particular framework used for this study was the career counselling literature because this research focused on the impact of the current volatile work environment in people's lives. The first author made every effort to find literature on young women in this age range to compare to the young women in this study, but there was a gap in the literature in this age range. However, since this is a topic that has little research in the literature and the research was exploratory in nature, it was intended to provide ideas and suggestions for future research in this area.

Method

In studying what helped and hindered young female workers who self-reported as doing well within the context of changes affecting their work, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005) was utilized based on the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) developed by Flanagan (1954). Woolsey (1986) suggested the CIT is an effective qualitative research method for counselling

psychology research citing its strengths for studying psychological phenomena. The ECIT was the best match for the current study because it is designed to gather information on helping and hindering factors. For the current study we were interested in exploring helping and hindering factors that facilitated or interfered with participants' ability to handle change well. As well, the ECIT allows the researcher to gather and explore contextual data on young women's experience of change more fully than the original CIT method.

Data collection and analysis followed established steps for an ECIT study: 1) selecting the frame of reference, which was to develop counselling interventions and inform career development theories; 2) forming the categories; and 3) establishing the appropriate level of specificity or generality to use in reporting the findings (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986). The protocols outlined by Butterfield et al., (2009) for conducting an ECIT research study were followed, including conducting all nine credibility checks that add to the trustworthiness of results. As stated by Flanagan (1954), in a CIT/ECIT study the number of critical incidents and wish list items constitutes the n for the study, not the number of participants. Prior to conducting this research ethics approvals were obtained and all aspects of the study were conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements, including informed consent procedures.

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) is a data reduction and analysis strategy that was utilized to analyze the contextual information collected in the interview. There are six steps to thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clark (2006) that this current study followed: (1) Familiarize yourself with your data, which involves transcribing the data, reading and re-reading and

writing down initial ideas; (2) Generating initial codes, which involves coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating the data relevant to each code; 3) Searching for themes, which involves collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme; (4) Reviewing themes, which involves checking if the themes work with the data collected; (5) Defining and naming themes, which involves ongoing analysis to refine the themes; and (6) Producing the report, which involves final analysis of themes and relating them back to the research question.

Participants

A total of 10 participants were recruited through purposive sampling in a variety of ways including distributing recruitment posters to list serves at local post-secondary educational institutions, non-profit agencies, churches, libraries and community centres. At no time did the researchers approach prospective participants directly. Prospective participants who indicated an interest who were known to the interviewer (the first author) were not included in the current study.

Ten interviews were conducted in person with female workers between the ages of 19-29. The industries in which these women worked included Education, Health Care, Policing, Insurance and the Restaurant/Service field. The number of years in these industries ranged from less than one year to six years with an average of 2.8 years. The job level ranged from entry level to middle management. Nine participants were born in Canada and one in another country. Seven participants were single, two were in common law relationships and one was married (with one child). Their education levels ranged from high school to a master's degree.

All participants had a high school diploma, one was pursuing a technical diploma, seven were enrolled in a bachelor's degree and one was enrolled in a master's program.

Data Collection Procedures

Using an interview guide that had been pilot tested and used in previous studies, the first author was trained to conduct ECIT interviews (Butterfield et al., 2009). To provide a context for the ECIT-related questions, participants were asked to describe what doing well meant to them, what changes had affected participants' work lives, the impact of those changes and whether participants had always handled change well. Participants were then asked the following critical incident questions: a) what has helped you in doing well with the changes that have affected your work; b) what are the things that have made it more difficult for you to do well; and c) are there things that would have helped you to continue doing well (wish list). The interviewer asked follow-up questions to ensure sufficient detail was obtained for each critical incident or wish list item, including an example and the importance of the incident/item to the participant (e.g., how did it help or hinder, or how would it have helped had it been available). Demographic information was gathered to describe the sample.

Data Analysis

The critical incident steps outlined by Butterfield et al. (2009) were followed to create the categories. Once the critical incidents (CIs) and wish list (WL) items had been identified in the transcripts, forming categories required looking for patterns, themes, similarities and differences among the incidents one transcript at a time in batches of three (Butterfield et. al, 2009).

Once the CIs and WL items from the first transcript had been placed into categories, the process was repeated for the second transcript (Butterfield et al., 2009). For this study the first author examined the helping CIs, placed any that fit into the existing categories and created new categories for those that did not fit. This process was repeated for the hindering CIs and WL items from the second transcript. This process was repeated again for the third transcript according to ECIT protocol (Butterfield et al., 2009). Once the CIs and WL items from the first three transcripts had been categorized, the process was repeated with the next three transcripts. With ECIT, it is necessary to rename categories and make decisions about the level of specificity or generality required in order to create an understanding of the domain being studied (Butterfield et al., 2009). The process of placing incidents into categories, examining the categories to see if they make sense, deciding whether there was significant overlap among categories that required them to be merged, and determining the need to break large categories into smaller ones continued until the CIs and WL items from all but 10% of the interviews had been placed into the emerging categories and the category scheme appeared to be complete as outlined in Butterfield et al. (2009). At this point, the self-descriptive titles of the categories were finalized and an operational definition written for each category. Placing the CIs and WL items from the final 10% of interviews into the categories that had been developed was the final step in creating the categories to represent the incidents provided by the participants (Butterfield et al., 2005). All the CIs and WL items from the final interview fit into the categories that had been created.

After the categories were formed, the data were subjected to nine established credibility checks (Butterfield et al., 2005) as follows: a) audiotaping the interviews for descriptive validity; b) interview fidelity (one in every three tapes were reviewed to ensure adherence to the ECIT research method and interview protocol; c) independent extraction of critical incidents by another researcher; d) exhaustiveness (no new categories were needed after placing incidents from the sixth interview); e) participation rates (categories were considered viable if at least 25% of the participants contributed to at least one of categories); f) independent placement of the incidents into categories where 80% or better is considered viable according to Andersson and Nilsson (1964); g) cross-checking by participants; h) expert opinions; and i) theoretical agreement. In all cases, the data/categories met or exceeded the established criteria (Butterfield et al., 2005).

Results

Critical Incident Data

The 10 participants reported a total of 147 helping and hindering critical incidents and wish list items. These break down into 85 helping incidents (58% of the total), 37 hindering incidents (25%), and 25 wish list items (17%) that were best represented by 9 categories (as shown in Table 1):

Quotes and additional examples of these critical incidents can be found in Table 2.

Friends and family. This category had the largest number of helping incidents where all 10 participants (100%) mentioned 19 helping incidents involving support from friends and family. This category also had the second largest number of hindering incidents (tied with School Pressure/Workload) with 4 participants (40%) who

Table 1

Helping, Hindering and Wish list Categories

	Helping Critical Incidents (N = 85)			Hindering Critical Incidents (N = 37)			Wish List Items (N = 25)		
	Participants (N=10)		Inci-dents	Participants (N=10)		Inci-dents	Participants (N=10)		Inci-dents
Categories	*n*	*%*	n	*n*	*%*	*n*	*n*	*%*	*n*
Friends & Family	10	100	19	4	40	4			
Management and Work Environment	9	90	24	6	60	15	6	60	9
Skills Training & Self-growth	6	60	10	3	30	4	5	50	5
Personality Traits & Attitudes	6	60	6	1	10	1	1	10	1
Self-care	5	50	10	1	10	1			
Personal Boundaries/Self-awareness	3	30	3						
Take Action	3	30	5						
School pressure/Workload				4	40	6	4	40	5
Personal Change/ Stressful Event				3	30	6	1	10	1

mentioned 4 incidents that fit in this category. There were no wish list items in this category. Helping incidents included the ability to utilize friends, partners and family members to listen, empathize, understand, provide practical help, solutions and/or different points of view. Outcomes included knowing there was a safe place to talk, feeling supported, valued and more positive about the changes affecting their work.

Hindering incidents for this category included the lack of ability to utilize friends, partners or family members to understand or help with changes affecting their work. For example, incidents reported included participants who felt at times that one or more friend or family member added to their stress and ability to stay focused on the job.

Management and Work Environment. This category had

the second highest number of helping incidents with nine participants (90%) who mentioned 24 incidents that were helping about management and the work environment, and this category had the highest number of hindering incidents with 6 participants (60%) who mentioned 15 hindering incidents about management and the work environment. This category also had the highest number of wish list incidents with 6 participants (60%) who mentioned 11 wish list incidents.

Helping incidents included positive characteristics of supervisors or colleagues who provided encouragement, constructive feedback and a work environment that was nurturing and team orientated. Outcomes included feeling encouraged, creative, more positive and accepting of change, decreased stress and increased productivity at work.

Hindering incidents for this category included negative characteristics of supervisors or colleagues who lacked communication, encouragement and a safe place to talk and a work environment that was non-team oriented. Outcomes included increased stress, being less productive, decreased motivation, and feeling less prepared for changes.

Wish list factors for this category involved participants who wished they had increased communication, team work, approachable managers, constructive feedback, and or more resources. Participants explained they would have felt better prepared, productive, more confident, and positive about the changes.

Skills Training and Self-growth. A total of 6 participants (60%) mentioned 10 helping incidents and was the third largest number of helping inci-

Table 2

Sample Quotes and Examples from Critical Incident Categories

Friends & Family	Helping incidents (100% of participants). Example: "I guess I would have to say that another thing is I'm lucky, my mom, was in the same line of work and so she is such a great sounding board for me. And talking to co-workers too about, about things like that, venting can help." (Participant 7). Hindering incident (40% of participants). Example: "Once when I told my friends I was working on being more assertive and that I didn't want to go out one night because I was busy their reaction was like 'yeah, I noticed you have become kind of mean'. So it was kind of like I knew it was a very funny, snide comment, but I felt like in a sense it was like a personal attack." (Participant 1)
Management & Work Environment	Helping incidents (90% of participants). Example: "I have a really great relationship with my direct supervisor. I also have a number of great relationships with peers that I feel, you know, they're great resources. If I feel stuck I can always go to them. It's non-judgmental." (Participant 6). Hindering incidents (60% of participants). Example: "You want to be able to go in there and talk to him about some of those issues, but you're never sure that they're going to be resolved. And the other big part is, he's not one who can offer you full disclosure or confidentiality." (Participant 5). Wishlist incidents (60%) included participants who wished they had increased communication, team work, approachable managers, constructive feedback, and or more resources.
Skills Training and Self-growth.	Helping incidents (60%). Example: "Self-growth I would say is because, the changes in my work was because you have to work on core competencies, I think that's an area of self-growth, because I chose to work on, last semester was public speaking and communication, and this semester was about being more assertive and doing things for myself." (Participant 1) Hindering incidents (30%). Examples included lack of opportunity to take courses or learn tasks that lead to new skills and self-growth. Wishlist incidents (50%). Examples included participants who wished they could have taken a workshop on change, an ongoing mentoring program, or more training that could have led to new skills and self-growth through learning.
Personality Traits and Attitudes	Helping incidents (60%). Example: "I think it's because no matter what is thrown at me I'm determined to do it, to get through it, and there's no question, like I'm going to do it, there's no question, no possibility of not doing it, it's not even in my head." (Participant 7) Hindering incidents (10%) included lack of confidence, over-determined and over-achieving.
Self-care	Helping incidents (50% of participants). Example: "I think it's the same sort of thing, it's just a way to express yourself and if there is anything you're not aware of that's sort of in the back of your mind stressing you out or bothering you, I think, being able to be creative can let it out and then it's sort of dealt with. So for me it was a sort of way of dealing with emotions and things like that. I was really angry sometimes when I'd play the piano, and then I'd feel better afterwards." (Participant 7) Hindering incidents (10%) included lack of self-care activities that decreased physical and emotional health.
Personal Boundaries and Self Awareness	Helping incidents (30%). Example: "Having set my life priorities allowed me to step back and realize that work was just support for life, life is a support for work, work supports the life I want to have. So it allowed me to realize that I can go into work and really love what I do, and if I have a bad day, go home and leave it. So I think it really helped me to say, when a challenge comes up at work, or something goes awry, it's just work." (Participant 3)
Take Action	Helping incidents (40% of participants). Example: "I've started creating a network of contacts, so it's just getting out there a little more, meeting people and introducing myself so they feel they can approach me and I can phone them and not feel like I'm always calling in a favour and being this faceless person." (Participant 5)
School Pressure/Workload	Hindering incidents (40%) of participants. Example: "When I was working full-time, it made for a very long work week, because I was working forty hours a week, and on top of that a long commute, and if the weekend was pretty hectic with school as well I had the sense like I had no down time. And I wasn't event feeling negative towards the situation: it was just that I was kind of worn out and tired." (Participant 10). Wishlist incidents (40%) included participants who wanted more time, finances or material things to help with school pressure and workload.
Personal Change/Stressful Event	Hindering incidents (30% of participants). Example: "I've had some family issues, a death in the family, and that's a lasting effect because my grandmother is not going well and her health is a big concern. Since I've moved I'm not near her anymore." (Participant 3).

dents tied with "Personality Traits and Attitudes", with 3 participants (30%) mentioning hindering incidents and 5 participants (50%) mentioning 5 wish list incidents under this category (the second largest wish list category). Helping factors in this category included helpful courses or tasks that led to new skills or self-growth such as taking a coaching course, an empowerment course, learning problem solving, stress management, assertiveness, leadership, strategic and time management skills. This category excludes incidents specific to "Management and Work Environment" because it appeared as a separate category. Outcomes included self-growth, increased resiliency, new strategies and skills to thrive and or be proactive with the change.

Hindering factors in this category included lack of opportunities to take courses or learn tasks that led to new skills and self-growth. Wish list factors in this category included wishing they had taken a course or gained skills to handle changes affecting their work. For example, participants wished they could have taken a workshop on change, an ongoing mentoring program, or more training that could have led to new skills and self-growth through learning.

Personality Traits and Attitudes. A total of 6 participants (60%) mentioned 12 helping incidents, only 1 participant mentioned 1 hindering incident and 1 participant mentioned 1 wish list item under this category. There were no wish list items under this category. Helping factors for this category included characteristics or attitudes that participants had that helped them handle changes affecting their work, such as being positive, hard-working, independent, stubborn, determined, competitive and flexible. Outcomes included being prepared and able to embrace change.

The hindering factors for this category include characteristics or attitudes that hindered a participant's ability to handle changes affecting their work such as lack of confidence, over-determined and over-achieving.

Self-care. This category had the fifth largest number of helping incidents with 5 participants (50%) who mentioned 10 helping incidents. There was only 1 participant (10%) who mentioned a hindering incident and there were no wish list incidents under this category. Helping factors for this category included activities that promoted physical and emotional health such exercising, socializing, getting enough sleep, playing music and sports, and engaging in recreation activities. Outcomes included self-expression, stress reduction, reflection, new perspectives, better balance, and more focus and drive at work.

The hindering factors for this category included lack of self-care activities that decreased physical and emotional health.

Personal Boundaries and Self-Awareness. This category had the sixth largest number of helping incidents (tied with the "Take Action" category) with a total of 3 participants (30%) who mentioned 3 helping incidents. There were no hindering or wish list items mentioned under this category. Helping factors for this category included personal boundaries that helped participants set clear boundaries and keep the bigger picture in mind, such as participants who described a set of values, personal and professional boundaries and sense of purpose. Outcomes included seeing the bigger picture, better focus and clarity with the changes and being more productive at work.

Take Action. A total of 3 participants (30%) mentioned 4 helping incidents and there were

no hindering or wish list items mentioned under this category. Helping factors for this category included participants who were active in the face of change. Participants reported that they looked for opportunities, took risks, problem solved, got involved, gained knowledge (actively sought out a workshop or meeting), tried new things, took initiative and networked. Outcomes included feeling proud, more satisfied, better prepared, embracing change and being more positive at work.

School Pressure/ Workload. There were no helping incidents mentioned under this category. This category had the second largest number of hindering incidents (tied with "Friends and Family") with a total of 4 participants (40%) who mentioned 6 hindering incidents. This category also had the third largest number of wish list incidents with 4 participants (40%) who mentioned 5 wish list items. Hindering factors for this category included incidents that made it difficult to meet school demands, such as commuting time, insufficient finances, and/or excessive work demands. Outcomes included less self-care, more stress, and difficulty balancing work and private life.

The wish list items included participants who wanted more time, finances or material things to help with school pressure/workload.

Personal Change/ Stressful Event. There were no helping incidents under this category; however, this category had the fourth largest number of hindering incidents (tied with "Skills Training and Self-growth") with a total of 3 participants (30%) mentioning 6 hindering incidents. There was one wish list incident reported in this category. Hindering factors for this category included events that occurred in the participant's life that hindered

their ability to handle changes affecting their work such as death of a family member, aging grandparent and moving. Outcomes included increased stress, more time off, less money, and being less focused and less productive at work. There was one wish list item where the participant wished a stressful event had not occurred.

Contextual Data

The contextual data consisted of three questions, including: (1) what does doing well mean to you; (2) describe the changes that have affected your work; and (3) have you always handled change well? Each of these is discussed below. The contextual data were analyzed following the procedures described by Braun and Clark (2006). Quotes and examples of the contextual data can also be found in Table 3.

What does doing well mean to you? Participants were asked to describe what doing well meant to them. The 10 participants reported 12 items of what doing well meant to them. These incidents fell into three themes 1) flexibility; 2) balance; and 3) thriving. Quotes and examples of the contextual data can also be found in Table 1 (following the critical incident section). Changes that affected participants' work. Participants reported that 60% of the changes they experienced that affected their work lives came from the work environment itself, compared to personal changes (30%) and professional changes (10%).

Participants were also asked to describe the changes they had experienced in the last six months that affected their work lives. These changes could have occurred in any area of the individual's life so long as they affected the person's work in some way. Participants shared

Table 3

Sample Quotes and Examples from Contextual Data

Contextual Data	
Interview Questions	**Representative Quotes and Examples**
What does doing well mean to you?	These incidents fell into three themes: 1) flexibility; 2) balance and 3) thriving. The following is a sample quote of the balance theme: "I think it means keeping a balance in my life between my work and family and friends and keeping, staying healthy. Just having balance." (Participant 8)
Changes affecting participants' work lives.	The vast majority of these changes (60%) were occupational changes as opposed to personal changes (30%) and professional changes (10%).
	An example of an occupational change included receiving a new job or promotion. An example of a personal change included one participant who reported she had had a fight with her mother-in-law that resulted in her moving out temporarily. An example of a professional change included one participant who was laid off from the gold exploration industry and she decided to go back to school for a completely different career and she took a part-time job to help her pay the bills.
Impact of changes	**Psychological impacts** represented 33% of participants. A quote of a positive and negative psychological impact is as follows:
	Positive: "Um, yeah, so for me the great benefit is I know the functions of five different positions within my office. Um, and in turn it, it makes you an invaluable part of the office because really no one can do my job but I can do other people's. So it's kind of motivating and it has increased my confidence." (Participant 3).
	Negative: "I think with the job change, it's challenging, and it's always extremely busy and you, um, you have to be able to balance it, and figure out ways of not to bring that home." (Participate 9).
	Professional impacts represented 30% of participants. A quote is as follows: "It's also helped me identify that I would like to be in management, because before this I wasn't really sure, but having gone through this, and having, you know, to have been a work study student and an assistant and taking over basic operations of the office I've realized that actually I think management would be something...." (Participant 5).
	Emotional impacts represented 26% of participants. An example of a negative and positive emotional impact is as follows:
	Negative: "I think I was a little bit depressed. Not like severely depressed, but definitely a little bit, like I had trouble waking up in the morning and going to work. I didn't have energy when I was, when I was at work, so that was definitely affecting the way I was performing at my job." (Participant 4)
	Positive: feeling more relaxed, having more fun and happier.
	Personal/family life impacts represented 11% of participants. Examples included finding less time for family, friends and self and one participant that found more time for family, friends or self.
Have you always handled change well?	Six participants reported they did not always handle change well and four reported they have always handled change well.

30 changes. These changes were grouped into three themes also using Thematic Analysis: 1) Occupational changes: new jobs or promotions downsizing, changes in policies and practices, changes in reporting structure, new duties or reduced working hours; "2) Personal Life Changes: new relationships, school pressure, moving or family issues; and 3) Professional Life Changes: which involved leaving work and switching careers. Participants were asked to discuss the impact of the changes on their lives. These consisted of 27 items and were grouped into four themes using the same steps outlined by Braun & Clark (2006). These themes are: 1) Psychological impacts (33% of participants, 9 items), which included both positive (feeling more valued, more confident) and negative impacts (feeling less motivated and valued; and 2) Professional impacts (30% of participants, 8 items), which included increased self-growth, increased leadership, assertiveness, or more strategic outlook; 3) Emotional impacts (26% of participants, 7 items), which included both positive impacts (more relaxed, having more fun and happier) and negative impacts (stress or depression);

and 4) Personal/family life impacts (11% of participants, 3 items), which included two participants, one of whom experienced less time for family, friends and self and one participant who had more time for family, friends and self.

Have you always handled change well? Finally, when asked "Have you always handled change well?", six participants reported they had not always handled change well. These participants stated they learned to handle change well gradually, gaining skills and maturity as young adults. The four participants who reported they had always handled change well stated they were exposed to change, gaining experience and growing up accepting change. Overall, the contextual data and categories provide insights into strategies and skill sets that young women can learn to help them navigate the complex world of work. These are now discussed.

Discussion

Critical Incident Technique Discussion

Overall, the results of the study provide insights into strategies and skill sets that young women can learn to help them navigate the complex world of work. There were seven categories with participation rates of 30% or more helping incidents which included support from "Friends and Family" and "Management and the Work Environment" along with more individually based attitudes and activities that helped young women function well in the workplace. These results are similar to earlier findings (Butterfield et al., 2010), but there also are some differences. As the current study involved young women who self-reported as doing well with changes affecting

their work it was a little surprising that there were five categories with participation rates of 30% or more hindering incidents compared to the earlier study that reported only 3 categories with participation rates of 30% or more hindering incidents (Butterfield et al., 2010). Lack of support from "Management and Work Environment" and "Friends and Family" were the categories with the largest hindering incidents and "School Pressure/Workload" was the category with the third largest number of hindering incidents. The higher number of categories with hindering incidents in this study could be explained by the fact that many of the participants were immersed in school and struggling with balancing work and their personal lives. As well, participants had less work experience, less self-awareness and sense of personal boundaries so may have found it more difficult to navigate the complexities of the workplace.

Further, the young women in this study seem to have relied more heavily on external factors such as support from friends and family and management and the work environment while at the same time these were hindering factors for many of these women. As well, the young women appeared to be relying less on internal factors such as personal boundaries, self-awareness and taking action to handle changes affecting their work and instead were taking specific courses to make up for these deficiencies.

Contextual Data

Participants were asked what "doing well with changes" meant to them and the themes that were generated from the data support the ECIT categories that emerged in the study. Many answers also support the post-traumatic growth literature that suggests some people seem to

thrive with change (Carver, 1998). For example, some participants reported feeling a sense of accomplishment or thriving with the change or seeing the impact one is having.

Participants were experiencing the vast majority of these changes in the work environment (60%) and this was not surprising as the business and workplace literature indicates rapid change in the work environment (Bender & Farvolden, 2008; Grant, 2008). This offers insights that the workplace plays a key role in either helping or hindering a young woman's ability to handle changes affecting her work. In fact, a high percentage of participants in this study reported that a management and work environment that had open communication, role models, encouragement and support was a key factor in helping them with changes affecting their work. The above findings were similar to the findings by Borgen et al. (2010), who found (68%) occupational changes, (19%) personal changes, (7%) attitude and approach changes and (7%) professional changes. Overall, the three themes found in the current study parallel the UBC studies with the exception of the "Attitude and Approach Changes" theme that was found in the UBC study (Borgen et al., 2010) but was not found in the current study. There is no obvious explanation for this difference. According to Super's career development model, the participants in the current study were in the age range for the "exploration stage", ages, 15-24, and the "establishment stage", ages 25-44 (Super, 1980). However, the small percentage of professional changes cited suggest the large majority of participants in this study were in the exploration stage as they reported they were doing little long term planning and not thinking broadly about their career, possibly because of the constant change they were experiencing. This supports evi-

dence that young women may be finding it harder to move from the "exploration stage" to the "establishment stage" in today's economy and labour market.

The impact of changes reported in this study suggest participants experienced both positive and negative impacts (consistent with the findings by Borgen et al., 2010). Many participants in this study also described symptoms consistent with depression, burnout and stress (Bender & Farvolden, 2008; Grant, 2008). These impacts seem to support Carver's (1998) model of psychological thriving, which states that after an initial decrease in level of functioning following an adverse event, some people are able to operate above the level of functioning experienced prior to the adverse event (Carver, 1998).

The results of the question "Have participants always handled change well?" suggests that skills to handle change well can be learned. For example, participants in this study reported learning to make important decisions on their own, being more independent with paying bills, paying rent and buying groceries. Other skills learned were assertiveness skills, public speaking skills, time-management, leadership skills and stress-management skills.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

A limitation of this study is that the results cannot be generalized to other populations because this was a qualitative study with a small sample. However, since this is a topic that has little research in the literature and the research was exploratory in nature, it was intended to provide ideas and suggestions for future research in this area.

Another potential limitation is researcher bias in selecting words or statements during the coding process in order to con-firm the researcher's inclinations towards a favored theory. Three credibility checks addressed this limitation. The high match rates and participant cross-checking results suggested researcher bias was not a major issue in this current study.

Implications for Further Research

The results of the current study provide insights into strategies and skill sets that would be helpful to young women to navigate the complex world of work. These potential strategies and skill sets would be interesting areas for future research. It seems apparent that young women in this study were heavily utilizing support from friends and family but more details are needed on what kinds of support and under what conditions these supports are helpful. For example, how do these relationships function and what kinds of support are being offered to help young women handle changes affecting their work?

There was evidence in this study that supportive management and work environments play a key role in helping or hindering young women handle changes affecting their work. There is evidence in the literature that respectful management actions, fair organizational practices and effective communication are very important in establishing and maintaining a supportive and positive work environment (Amundson, Borgen, Jordan, & Erlebach, 2004; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). More research is needed on understanding sub-groups of women, and not assuming homogeneity of experiences. Further research is needed on what specific management styles and work environments are helping young women handle changes affecting their work, especially if women are still experiencing negative attitudes towards them in the workplace.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The study offers insights into strategies and skill sets that help young women do well with changes affecting their work in today's volatile work environment. This may involve utilizing their support network consisting of family, friends, colleagues and/or managers to gain new perspectives and ideas, and gain support, advice and resources needed to overcome challenges they face. It could also involve exploring internal resources to manage change such as actively seeking out workshops to gain new skills to adapt to and embrace change, or actively getting involved in self-care initiatives to manage stress and balance work and personal lives. It may also involve actively setting personal boundaries and gaining self-awareness to adapt to and embrace change. There is some research to support these ideas (Borgen et al., 2010; Butterfield et al., 2010).

As the literature indicates, the career counselling practices and models have not necessarily kept up with today's changing work environments and the new economy (Fouad, 2007; Goodman et al., 2006). The results of this study contribute to the number of researchers who highlight the need for theories, interventions, and new career counselling models that address contemporary workers' ongoing needs such as the Chaos Theory of Career Counselling (Bright & Pryor, 2005) or the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005).

This study offers insights into strategies and skill sets that help young women do well with changes affecting their work. First, a career counselling theory that helps young women become more aware of their existing skill sets and potential through self-re-

flection, self-questionnaires and/or career assessment tools can help them utilize the skill sets they already have to adapt and embrace change. For example, there were suggestions in this study that addressing issues related to personality traits and attitudes, and personal boundaries and self-awareness, can be assets in today's volatile work environments. There is support for this idea by key researchers in the field that suggest a career practice theory should focus on what is working as opposed to what is not working (Fouad, 2007; Goodman et al., 2006).

Second, this study adds to the body of literature that change is now mainstream in the workplace and preparing for a career that evolves and changes to reflect a volatile work environment is more important than ever. It appeared that young women in this study who were taking specific courses gained new skills and self-growth to help them navigate and adapt to the changing work conditions and environments. A career theory that specifically addresses helping young women plan their careers in terms of skill sets they will need to adapt and be flexible with today's work environments seems evident. This suggestion is supported by career researchers in the field (Fouad, 2007; Goodman et al., 2006).

Third, a career counselling theory that assists young women in choosing which organizations they want to work for seems relevant. There was evidence in this study that a supportive management and work environment can make a difference in helping or hindering young women in handling changes affecting their work. This may involve informational interviews with regular workers, managers or human resource professionals in various organizations to learn about employee morale, management styles and policies and procedures of that organization. This may be particularly important to young women because if they are inexperienced and lack self-awareness and personal boundaries to navigate the complexities of the workplace, they will need support in juggling the demands of school and work or being aware of harassment or negative attitudes towards them. Women could use the information gained in informational interviews to identify workplaces that would support these challenges. The types of organizations that have firm policies and procedures to prevent and address these issues would be attractive places to work, as would workplaces that have strong leadership and high employee morale.

In summary, the current study took a positive psychology approach to examine what helps or hinders young women in handling changes well that affect their work. The categories offer a starting point for counselling interventions and areas for future research. The results support the literature about the special needs young women have in the workplace, and the results offer hope that young women who are not currently handling change well can learn to handle it well. Such strategies may help young working women handle changes affecting their work, provide insight into the career counselling profession, and possibly highlight the need for interventions unique to this age range.

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