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**The Canadian Journal of Career Development/
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CONTENTS

Number 2

EDITORIAL

ARTICLES

Beyond Green Jobs: Assessing Sustainability-Enhancing Career Options

Neil Baldwin 4

Training Pre-Service Teachers in Career Education: Developing Foundational Perceptions, Knowledge and Skills

Mark W. Slomp, Thelma M. Gunn, & Kerry B. Bernes 18

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

Leila J. Howard, Lee D. Butterfield, William A. Borgen, & Norman E. Amundson 36

Career Counselling With Community College Students: Applicability of a Narrative Approach

Maria Timm 49

What Helps and Hinders the Hopefulness of Post-Secondary Students Who Have Experienced Significant Barriers

Barbara A. Smith, Lauri Mills, Norman E. Amundson, Spencer Niles, Hyung Joon Yoon, & Hyoyeon In 59

RESEARCH IN MOTION

Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth: Part III

Carolyn Acker & Norman Rowen 76



Editorial

Welcome to the fall 2014 edition of *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*. Contained within are six articles each touching on a unique topic relating to career development in Canada and worldwide. We hope you enjoy this edition.

Our first article entitled 'Beyond Green Jobs: Assessing Sustainability-Enhancing Career Options' looks into how career development practitioners and environmental sustainability practices can merge for the betterment of clients. Neil Baldwin also provides a proposed model for practitioners to use with clients to help assess sustainability-enhancing career options.

In 'Training Pre-Service Teachers in Career Education: Developing Foundational Perceptions, Knowledge and Skills' Slomp, Gunn, and Bernes reveal the findings from a pilot project undertaken at the University of Lethbridge that addressed reports that students in the k-12 education system are not able to access effective career services. Does providing career education and knowledge about how to infuse career support into regular curriculum assist students? Read this article to find out.

Barriers to education and within education affect numerous students every year worldwide. Still many are able to continue on and achieve their goals despite what stood in their way. 'What Helps and Hinders the Hopefulness of Post-Secondary Students Who have Experienced Significant Barriers' is an article that focuses on determining what such external environmental factors and personality characteristics are influential at impacting students personal and career development.

Female workers make up a large percentage of the Canadian workforce, yet little is known about female workers and how they adjust to changes in their careers during different ages and career stages. In 'Young Women Who Are Doing Well with Changes Affecting Their Work: Helping and Hindering Factors' the authors examine how female workers adapt to change, what change means to them, and what factors assisted or blocked their adapting to changes in their work.

Traditional career counselling models are still used at many universities and community colleges. Yet, Maria Timm questions the applicability of such traditional models for students attending community colleges. 'Career Counselling with Community College Students: Applicability of a Narrative Approach' examines how the narrative approach might be the best intervention tool for the community college culture over traditional models. She also addresses how the narrative approach can potentially reveal both internal and external factors that may impact client career decision-making.

The final article in this edition is the conclusion of a three-part series on 'Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth. Part III' by Carolyn Acker & Norman Rowen looks into the lessons learned from the Pathways to Education Program. Part I is available in Volume 12(1) pages 63-79, and part II is available in Volume 12(2) pages 105-140.

We are also proud to announce that *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* now has social media sites. You can find us on our Facebook page located at <https://www.facebook.com/cjcdonline> and at our LinkedIn page located at <http://tinyurl.com/CJCDLinkedIn>. By joining these pages you will be able to keep up-to-date on journal events and promotions, read previews of upcoming articles, ask questions, and engage with a like-minded community. We look forward to seeing you there!

Rob Shea
Founding Editor



The Canadian Journal
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Etta St. John Wileman Award for Lifetime Achievement in Career Development

Why develop this award?

This award is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who have devoted their lives to furthering the profession of career development.

To celebrate individuals who have established themselves as leaders within our profession.

Leaders who combine the role of researcher, educator, author, practitioner and career leader.

To encourage individuals in Canada and around the world to celebrate those around us who have contributed so much to our identity as career development professionals.

To establish a significant and uniquely Canadian award that recognizes those individuals who have devoted their lives to the enhancement of career development practice, administration, research and education.

Who can be nominated?

Individuals who have demonstrated significant and long-term commitment to the principles and experience outlined above.

When is the award presented?

The award is presented at the annual Cannexus National Career Development Conference in Canada. The award is presented on a less than annual basis as is determined by the selection committee.

Who comprises the selection committee?

The selection committee is comprised of the Founding Editor of the Canadian Journal of Career Development; a previous award winner; a career development professional; and the Board Chair of the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling.

What is awarded?

The award recipient will be presented with a handmade Innuksuk by an Inuit artisan from Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada. The Innuksuk is made from a precious stone called Labradorite native to the coast of Labrador. Each award will be presented at the annual Cannexus National Career Development Conference.

Submissions

To ensure confidentiality and to minimize disappointment, it is requested that the nominee not know about the nomination in advance.

Submissions should attest to each of the principles outlined above in the section - Why develop this award? This is an award for significant and lifetime commitment to career development. Unsuccessful nominations will be considered for a period of two further years.

Nominations

Nomination packages should be sent to:

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Beyond Green Jobs: Assessing Sustainability-Enhancing Career Options

Neil Baldwin
Sheridan College

Abstract

The world is on a path toward unsustainability which affects all living beings. As career development practitioners, we have a responsibility to be capable of helping clients consider and integrate a holistic concept of sustainability into their career decision-making when they call upon us for such assistance. The environment may be the highest priority concern but it is also time to go beyond just “green careers” to think about sustainability in the broad sense. This article analyzes the current state of green careers, proposes a model for clients to assess sustainability-enhancing career options, examines related growth opportunities, and calls on career development practitioners to be part of the sustainability solution in bringing these considerations to the forefront.

*“The world we have created is structurally and chronically, but not incurably, unsustainable.”
Laszlo (2009)*

The concept of sustainability is on the minds of many people these days, and so it should be given the predicament of unsustainability the world is in. As career development practitioners, we are more likely than ever before to encounter clients who include sustainability in

their set of work values so it is important we are equipped to offer them a means to evaluate the degree to which any given career option contributes to, or detracts from, a future that is sustainable. The recent focus on growth areas in “green” career options is a positive development but only one part of a larger solution. We should also help clients to realize there are many possible ways they can have a direct or indirect effect on sustainability through their work.

To that end, this article will present a model for assessing the sustainability potential of any career option, how it applies to the existing slate of “green” careers, and how to broaden the notion of sustainability-enhancing career options to include but also go beyond those primarily focused on the environment. But first we need to understand what “sustainability”—perhaps the buzzword of this decade—means.

The best context to understand sustainability is to appreciate the main ways in which the world has become unsustainable. When something is said to be unsustainable, it means it cannot continue without change. There is no single reason or root cause but rather a set of inter-related circumstances and events that have brought the world to its present unsustainable state. Laszlo (2009), Flannery (2006, 2009),

and numerous other reports including a major IUCN paper (Adams, 2006) highlight many facts along our current path toward unsustainability, but a summary of the most salient points follows. The three types of unsustainability described below are reflected in the pillars of sustainability which form part of the career sustainability assessment model.

Unsustainability in The Environment

Our environment is currently unsustainable in so much as, according to Flannery (2009), we are already exceeding the earth’s capacity to support our species by 25%. Water, essential to all life, is polluted and misused, even as our reserves of fresh water are decreasing. The total amount of productive land, cropland, is being lost each year even while at the same time there is increasing exploitation of natural areas such as forests and wetlands. Air, like water, is increasingly polluted; its oxygen content decreasing, while other gases such as CO₂ are increasing. In just 200 years of industrialization, the proportion of CO₂ in the atmosphere has risen by 30% (Flannery, 2009). In addition, up to 30% of all animal species are under threat of extinction during this century (Flannery, 2006).



Consider that all life is inter-related and this fact alone gives reason to pause. In terms of global warming and climate change, there remains ongoing debate as to why these environmental changes are occurring but according to the IPCC (2007), there is a 90% degree of certainty that there is human cause to climate change. Whatever the cause, that it is actually happening is almost indisputable.

Unsustainability in The Economy

As we saw in 2008, and continue to see today, the world has an inherently unstable financial system. Some countries may be more secure than others but in a world which is highly connected in every way, our global reality is that no economy exists in isolation. All finance is linked, whether it be that of individuals, corporations, banks or governments. So as debt of all types increases, bailouts and reorganizations continue in various forms but it seems like putting shims under a house that is not built on a firm foundation—the next big storm may wash it away. Consumption of all types continues to grow, as does the massive world population which requires them. This leads to overexploitation of resources. All resources cost money to acquire, process, distribute and sell but the uncertainty of those resources coupled with the rising demand creates a volatility which is yet another input into an unpredictable global economy.

Unsustainability in Society

The rich-poor gap continues to grow. In Canada, 1% of the population earn 10.6% of Canadians' total income (Grant, 2013). Eighty percent of the world's domestic product belongs to one billion people; the remaining 20% is shared by almost 6 billion (Laszlo, 2009). Particularly in the western world, there is a breakdown of social structures. Job security, and family security, are largely things of the past. In an unnatural twist on evolution, the twentieth century brought "survival of the fittest" and "greed is good" and individualism took rise over social responsibility in many parts of the world. Among both groups and individuals, we see various and increasing manifestations of aggression, competition and desperation in both rich and poor countries (Laszlo, 2009).

Defining Sustainability

Flannery (2009) suggests that we may be moving beyond the tipping point, sooner rather than later, when the emphasis will irrevocably cease from being about stopping or reversing and become about merely mitigating and extending life on earth: "There is now a better than even risk that, despite our best efforts, in the coming two or three decades Earth's climate system will pass the point of no return. This is most emphatically not a counsel of despair; it is simply a statement of my assessment of probability."

If this state in which the world finds itself today, is unus-

tainability, then what does sustainability look like? We need some grasp of this if we are to assist clients who value sustainability with integrating it as a consideration in their career decision-making. Dictionaries define sustainability as variations of the capacity to endure, to continue, and to perpetuate. As it applies to the human element, Flannery (2009) sees sustainability as a derivation of the eighth commandment—do not steal. Sustainability, he says, comes down to not taking from future generations what we need for ourselves today. But perhaps the best known and most widely quoted definition of sustainability as it applies to our progress on this planet comes from the United Nations General Assembly (1987): "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

While no single definition of sustainability is universally accepted, there are clearly multiple elements to it and many would identify 3 critical supporting pillars: environmental (all living and not living things which occur naturally on earth), social (societies, cultures, communities, people, and the relationships among them), and economic (the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, commodities and resources). These pillars can be envisioned as overlapping circles

As depicted by Adams (2006), when there is balance among the three pillars, as in the very middle of the overlapping circles, sustainability is that point where the needs of all three are

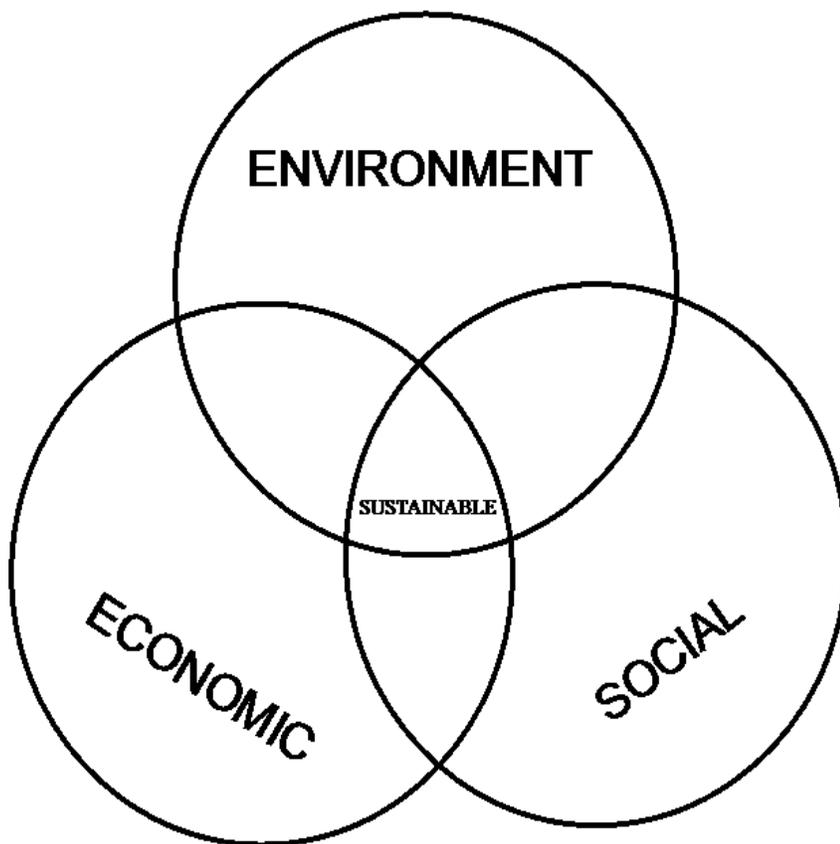


Figure 1. Sustainability as a balance of three pillars. Adapted from Adams (2006)

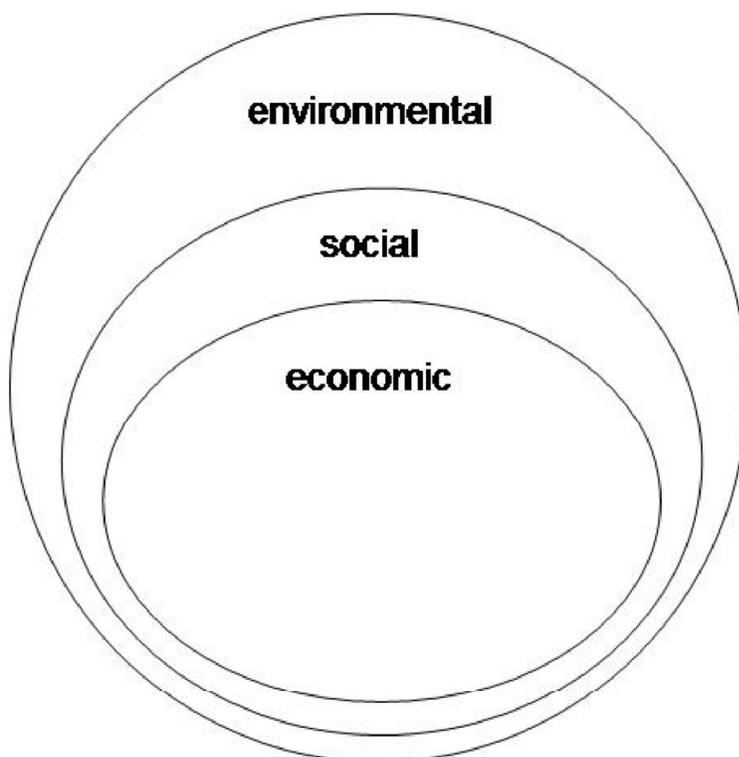


Figure 2. Hierarchy of sustainability constraints. Adapted from Scott Cato (2009)

more-or-less equally reconciled.

In addition, some thinkers on sustainability such as Scott Cato (2009) envision a hierarchy among the pillars wherein social factors constrain economic factors, and environmental factors constrain social factors. The idea being that the economy only exists because of people and can only persist within the social context. Similarly, people can only be existent within the context of the natural world. Environmental sustainability, therefore, is seen as the master pillar since it overshadows the other two. It is not that the demands of one pillar are more “important” than another but it does imply that environmental demands will inevitably affect, or even direct, some social and economic demands.

The Current State of “Green” Careers

The hierarchical arrangement of sustainability pillars does give perspective on just how broadly environmental matters affect and encompass everything else, including careers. What have come to be commonly referred to as “green” careers are those types of work that are in some way involved with responding to environmental needs, and/or the industries involved in them. In an interesting, and paradoxical, analogy Llewellyn et al (2008) suggested the notion that “green” is the new plastic. There was a time when plastic was the next big, great thing and it began to come into common use in everything and everywhere. It was ubiquitous. Everyone talked about it and almost everyone



wanted to make use of it in almost any possible application, though not all actually understood what it was nor its implications. “Green”, as a concept, has become just that but the problem is that green does not necessarily equate with being sustainable. This is most certainly the case for no small number of the many consumer products touted as green. For example, the “green choice” weed trimmer touted as eco-friendly since it is fueled by propane rather than gasoline—true, it is somewhat less polluting but conveniently ignoring that fact that propane is a petroleum derivative and of course the many cylinders that would find their way into the waste stream. Retail analysts talk about “green-washing” in consumer products and it is likewise true for some of the careers labeled green. It is easy to label something as green, but perhaps more difficult to quantify it as such.

According to the United Nations Environment Program et al (2008), green jobs reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors, ultimately to levels that are sustainable. In a broader characterization, McLelland (2008) says the green collar sector refers to the portion of the overall economy that is focused on making a positive impact on the planet.

Llewellyn et al (2008) found over 60 different definitions of sustainability in their research on defining green careers only to conclude there is no standard definition that could be generally applied. They say that what constitutes a green career depends a great deal on who is

using the term. As one example, the nuclear industry may see itself as a provider of green employment, while others may have an entirely different perspective. Nevertheless, whatever “green” is, one thing it is not is a bubble, not something that is going to disappear. It has clearly reached the mainstream of business and public consciousness in general. As such, it is an influential growth area. The Globe Foundation (2010) talks about the green economy as a fast-growing economic development model that focuses on the creation of green jobs, the promotion of real, sustainable economic growth, and the prevention and amelioration of environmental concerns.

Different groups have varied definitions for terms like green jobs, green economy, green collar and green sector, some broad and some specific. Katz (2012) details several different methods for defining green jobs but, when distilled into specifics, it comes down to industries related to the environment. In terms of sustainability, on the one hand, this is in line with Scott Cato’s (2009) assertion that the environment is the pillar of sustainability which encompasses the others. But, on the other hand, the environment as a factor in sustainability does not exist in isolation from the other two pillars. Recall, from chart 1, that sustainability is the area within which the three pillars overlap. Cassio & Nash (2009), who have produced one of the more comprehensive attempts to catalogue green careers and group them into occupational clusters, say that it involves working in jobs that are, “focused

on sustainability and/or environmental protection or preservation. These jobs can be defined either by the nature and purpose of the job or by the nature and purpose of the employer.” This is another important distinction because it is not necessary to have an occupation which directly affects the environment to have an effect on environmental sustainability. For example, someone could work as an energy auditor, or they could be a graphic designer, book-keeper or office manager for the company providing those energy auditing services. All would be green careers in some respect because, directly or indirectly, they are helping ameliorate environmental circumstances. However, work which positively affects the environment in some way is not the only path to making a difference in the world. There are many careers beyond the green collar sector that can directly and indirectly affect sustainability so, just as with consumer products, we need to challenge a presumption that only those labeled green are useful to the world.

Beyond Green Careers

There are an increasing number of books and reports listing green careers and the need to bring awareness to what has come to be called the “green collar” sector but, according to Hazell (2009), “even the most advanced green-jobs strategies are not enough to achieve a truly sustainable economy. Most do not encompass the radical transformation of our carbon-based economy to one that will avoid catastrophic climate change.



They tend to assume that the future will be much like the past, with gradual linear shifts.” The problem, of course, is that the way the world is changing no longer appears to be gradual, nor are the changes happening in the linear manner they may have before.

Regardless of which definition one uses, a “green” career may be one that benefits the environment, but that does not automatically mean it has a net benefit to sustainability. The broad group of careers which do contribute to sustainability include, as a subset, many green careers, but also many others. If it is the case that sustainability is the big challenge of the new millennium we have entered, it is time to go beyond thinking about “green” careers to instead more broadly consider the concept of sustainable careers.

Doing a search on “sustainable careers” typically leads to articles on career options that are variously described as self-sustaining, self-perpetuating, “safe” bets, and of long-term benefit to the individual working in them. For the purposes of this article, a sustainable career is considered to be one which augments and cultivates sustainability as conceptualized in the three pillars model. In other words, a career option which makes a net contribution to environmental, social and/or economic sustainability and therefore is of benefit to humanity’s ability to continue, or perpetuate, itself. To use a more descriptive title, for this article such types of work will be termed “Sustainability-Enhancing Career Options” (SECOs).

Who is Interested in SECOs?

One does not need to understand all the science behind why it is happening to grasp the enormity of what is happening in the world’s march toward irreversible unsustainability. Any person who accepts the basic observational facts evident in the social, economic, and environmental reality in the world around us, and accepts that all living things are interrelated in one way or another, will have to acknowledge there is a major problem that should demand our attention as inhabitants of this planet. In exploring the ethics of lifelong guidance as it applies to sustainable development, Saukkonen & Parkkinen (2011) speak of a global increase in ecological awareness. As practitioners, we are engaged in the business of helping people explore career options and, given the state of the world summarized above, when we encounter clients who express a desire to do something about it, we should be able to help them consider the impact their choices may have on sustainability. It is not our role to dictate one career option as better than another, nor one more important or significant, any more than it is to push a client toward a career with more money or better outlook. But, much like when it comes to providing resources that point to income or occupational outlook, in this age we should be equipped to provide the tools and information to help clients make informed choices with regards to sustainability.

Indeed, our clients themselves may be wanting those kind

of resources and guidance from career development practitioners. Llewellyn et al (2008) discuss the move toward green employment as a shift in values and in putting those values into action. As is the case with consumer products, for some people and businesses the push toward green and sustainable may only be an opportunistic notion. But for many others, the continued shift in focus toward sustainability reflects a desire to do something meaningful and rewarding. Sustainability can be looked upon not only as a work value in and of itself, but also as something which can be incorporated within other work values such as aesthetics, personal development, altruism, achievement, and so on.

While of relevance to everyone, sustainability in careers may be of particular interest to younger generations. It has become part of their vocabulary and psyche as they progress through school. Many of us are gradually integrating it into our worldview but it is the younger generations who are destined to be most directly touched by unsustainability because it is they from whom we may be “stealing” future resources to feed and fuel the requirements of the present day. Power Scott (2010) agrees it is the youth and young adults of today who are most interested in green careers because the degree to which we can live sustainably most directly and immediately affects them. Speaking directly to that audience she writes, “It wasn’t like when your parents and grandparents were teenagers. There was an environmental movement but it was on the



fringes, not in people's faces... recycling was a new idea and composting... was one of those odd things hippies did in their backyards."

A Model for Assessing SECOs

If it is the case that we have an important role to play in assisting clients who express a desire to consider the impact of career choices on sustainability, the next question is how. A first step might be to explain to clients that, despite the many books and reports listing so-called green careers, it is not so simple as saying a particular option is or is not sustainable. As McLelland (2008) observes, it isn't about green or not but rather about shades of green when it comes to careers. Further, Cassio & Rush (2009) point out that a green career need not be entirely or specifically focused on sustainability and/or environmental protection but simply should have a net positive impact on it. A second step would be to explain that, while some careers may be more obviously sustainability-enhancing (or detracting!) than others, there is no absolute answer and ultimately the assessment of sustainability boils down to making informed choices. This article proposes the use of a two-dimensional model to provide clients with a framework for assessing the degree to which any given career option contributes to sustainability.

Sustainability, as discussed above, is a singular concept supported by three essential elements: environmental, social, and economic. Similarly, a "ca-

reer" is a singular concept but with many facets. Donald Super is widely recognized for broadening the scope of career beyond solely what one does to earn income and, more recently, expanded by Herr et al (2004) to consider it as being all that one does, in their various life roles, throughout their lifespan. Based on this theory, there are a variety of roles which comprise our career but, factored down to their most basic, they would be: worker, learner, leisurite, citizen, family member. The intent of this model is for use in assessing sustainability of what is done within the income-earning work role but it could just as easily be applied to the others.

Beyond looking at the tasks one performs, whether in their work role or any other, career is also about where and how they are carried out. Just as sustainability has three pillars, the concept of career has three primary considerations:

- Occupation – the specific duties and responsibilities, and the skills and knowledge required to do them, as can be found, for example, categorized within the National Occupational Classification (NOC).
- Industry – the industrial sector within which one performs their occupation; the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) lists broad industries and their sub sectors.
- Employer – the specific setting or place of work

within a given industry or, of course, one may also be self-employed.

- Combing the three pillars of sustainability with the three factors associated with the work realm produces a two-dimensional grid that can be used to evaluate the degree to which any given career is sustainability-enhancing, or not.

The grid is comprehensive because it accounts for the three pillars of sustainability and the three primary dimensions of career, but then comes the question of what type of ratings will fill the 9 spaces. If the purpose of the model is to assess the degree to which a career affects sustainability then one possible rating system may consider the potential positive impact on each pillar of sustainability:

- 4 - substantial and near certain
- 3 - significant
- 2 - moderate
- 1 - mild
- 0 - unknown, neutral or unlikely

This is just one example since there are many possibilities for rating schemes. Some examples of use are provided below. Those who enjoy complexity may wish to separate the intensity of impact on sustainability with how likely that impact is, creating a three-dimensional model. Another potential rating scheme could involve the use of negative numbers when there is more potential to diminish rather



		Components of Career		
		Occupation	Industry	Employer/Setting
Pillars of Sustainability	Environmental			
	Social			
	Economic			

Figure 3. Grid to assess sustainability enhancing potential

than augment one of the sustainability pillars. Whatever rating system a client might decide to use, the priority should be on (1) consideration of the impact on sustainability, and (2) the rating system being applied in a consistent manner.

In many cases, a certain component of career may have both positive and negative impacts on a particular pillar of sustainability. It may not be uncommon to find career options that are both part of the problem and part of the solution. When there are both positive and negative impacts, the client should attempt to make an assessment of the net impact on sustainability.

An example provided by the Globe Foundation (2010): “When an occupation produces

an output or lowers the price of a product that offers positive environmental externalities, this may be considered in whole or in part a green job. Two examples would be the net environmental impacts when an engineer remediates an old mining site, or when a solar panel manufacturer increases the supply of photovoltaic (PV) panels, thereby reducing their cost to consumers in the market, which in turn contributes to lessening greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.”

There are inherent challenges in the creation of such a model. First and foremost, is that it is ultimately subjective based on how informed the career decision-maker is with regard to sustainability factors and to the career itself. To some extent, this can be solved through discussion

with the practitioner and through effective career research instruction. Another issue is that the nine ratings are unlikely to be of equal weighting. For instance, an occupation’s net impact on environmental sustainability may be of somewhat different importance (either in actuality, or from the client’s perspective) than the impact of the work setting on social sustainability. So it is not a simple mathematical exercise of adding up numbers to compare careers.

While not flawless, the grid has two significant strengths. First, it requires a holistic view of what encompasses both sustainability (consideration of all three pillars rather than just environmental only) and career (occupation, industry, employer) rather than going only by published lists of green careers which might tend to focus only on a single element of career or sustainability. Second, in spite of its potential for inherent subjectivity, use of the grid to make assessments of career impact will, by default, not only raise awareness of sustainability issues but also increase the client’s understanding of what their potential career entails as they research and process the information required to make sustainability ratings. As practitioners, we are always encouraging our clients to seek out career information. We try to impress upon them the importance of such data in making effective career decisions. Incorporating an analysis of sustainability has a potential side benefit of increasing the depth of clients’ career research overall.



Case Examples

These hypothetical cases suggest just a few possible applications of the grid.

Case Example One: An Apparently “Green” Option

A client is considering a career as a solar panel installer for a renewable energy equipment distributor, though with no particular employer in mind yet. In terms of both the occupation and the industry, the client would likely be inclined to rate both highly on the environmental pillar since putting this equipment into use will offset energy sources with long term costs and/or consequences. The client may conclude there is mild to moderate benefit on the economic pillar since solar panel equipment is useful, will last over time, and function somewhat like a solid asset with good “return on investment”. When it comes to the social pillar, the client may find it more difficult to rate, though he may consider whether there are social benefits to installing panels or social costs related to how the panels are sourced. When the client does get to the point of seeking an employer, he may also consider sustainability issues particular to various work settings. Some examples might include driving territory/range (environmental pillar), whether the employer purchases Canadian-made solar panels (economic pillar), or whether the employer contributes to any community causes like sponsoring sports teams (social pillar).

Case Example Two: Traditionally “Green” yet Potentially Sustainable.

A client is considering a career as a Child and Youth Worker, within public-sector social services, ideally with an employer in an urban setting. The occupation and industry may not have any obvious positive impact on the environmental pillar of sustainability but they likely do not detract from it. They do both, however, have a direct impact on social sustainability and at least indirect impact on economic sustainability particularly if part of their work supports youths becoming/staying employed. Within this same occupation and industry, it is possible that different employers may vary considerably in sustainability-enhancing potential. Employers in urban work settings, for example, may be better for the environmental pillar than one which requires much driving. Moreover, the philosophies of different social service agencies may result in more, or less, impacts on the social and economic pillars depending how they translate to services offered

Case Example Three: Nothing To Do With Sustainability, Or Does It?

Nothing to do with sustainability, or is it? A client is considering entry-level work within a bank, perhaps as a personal banker. The client’s goal is to work for a large bank, though she does not have a particular employer in mind. On the surface, the occupation may seem to

have little if any impact on sustainability but depending on the scope of services the client foresees providing it could indeed directly impact economic sustainability and indirectly impact social sustainability in terms of matters like budgeting, responsible use of credit, and families or other social units achieving goals which contribute to their development. The client would need to consider to what degree the industry, in this case retail banking, impacts each pillar of sustainability; there are like several pluses and minuses in that assessment. Another consideration would be that, within large retail banks there is typically opportunity to develop one’s career internally. Banks tend to promote from within and move staff around positions, departments, and geographic areas, which could alter the impact potential at various points in the client’s career. When it came down to the employer, banks are often involved in various community efforts and causes which could impact any or all three of the sustainability pillars (as just one example, TD Bank’s Friends of the Environment Foundation).

These three case examples are only simplified applications. The possibilities are endless, as is the degree of detail which might be considered. In all cases, the depth of analysis is up to the client; as long as it is generally consistent and they reflect on all three factors in some way, they will have taken a useful step toward considering sustainability in their career exploration. Using the grid will also help clients appreciate that they can make a



difference to sustainability—that they can be part of the solution—even without doing so-called “green collar sector” work. Using the grid will help clients move beyond just thinking about what they do in their career—their occupation—to also include where and how they do it. It is possible to perceive many occupations as having no obvious impact on sustainability (e.g., administrative/clerical work) but depending on what industry or work setting in which they choose to do their work (e.g., a social service agency, a green energy producer, assisted seniors living, a conservation organization, public housing or healthcare, just to name a few) they can indeed have a positive impact. For some people, their work values will dictate they need a direct and obvious impact on sustainability. But for many others it may be adequate, and provide a feeling of integrity, knowing that they can still be “part of the solution”.

Careers to Watch for Growth Opportunities

Clients often ask practitioners what occupations or industries will be most in demand. A relatively safe answer to this question might include many of the occupations and industries that have a positive impact on sustainability. Just as the reality of demographics fuels inevitable growth in the health care sector, the realities of the world’s unsustainability are increasing exponentially and rising up in the priorities of people, politicians, and businesses even if there may be somewhat different motiva-

tions among them.

A more sustainable world will be a different world, with different needs. When it comes to careers, there will inevitably be losses and gains but that has always been true of change, and those career losses and gains are likely to accelerate in line with the priority that sustainability takes in the public psyche. It follows that some of the careers with strong growth will likely be those which most directly augment one or more pillars of sustainability, perhaps with the broadest potential in those connected with environmental sustainability since it is this factor which overshadows and constrains the other two (Scott Cato, 2009).

One obvious example is almost anything to do with forestry. Trees are a big part of the answer, says Flannery (2009), an effective means of carbon capture each year drawing down 8% of atmospheric carbon. Whether it is growing trees, protecting their habitat, managing forests (silviculture), or using them as resources (perhaps in new and more sustainable ways), these careers are likely to see opportunities in the coming decades.

Another example is renewable energy equipment, whether making it, selling it, installing it or maintaining it. Predictions are only just that, not fact, but they are based on the current facts of the world’s unsustainability and the assumption it will matter more and more such that action takes place in increasing amounts.

The low-carbon reality will affect careers in many sec-

tors (Hazell, 2009), especially those involving the transport of goods and people, which of course has numerous implications considering the number of careers not only directly involved (e.g., driver, pilot, deckhand) but also indirectly involved (maintenance, repair, manufacturing). Heintzman (2010) argues that it is not just about green jobs or green sectors but that all jobs should be greened, reoriented in some way or another to align them with a more sustainable world and the resulting changes in priorities and practices of consumers, investors, businesses and governments. The opportunities are not just limited to the environmental pillar. The root causes or symptoms of social and economic unsustainability could also lead to growth opportunities. For example, arising from financial unsustainability, the potential increased need for debt counsellors and professionals engaged in debt restructuring.

Some other examples of SECO growth opportunities can be found in the best-selling book *Megatrends 2010*, in which Aburdene (2007) foresees five sectors directly and indirectly related to a more sustainable world:

- Sustainability sector – ecologically sound construction, renewable energy technologies, socially responsible investments.
- Healthy living sector – demand for natural and organic foods, nutritional supplements, and personal care.
- Alternative healthcare



sector – wellness centres, complementary medical services and healthcare.

- Personal development sector – seminars, courses, shared experiences in the body-mind-spirit area.
- Ecological lifestyle sector – demand for ecologically-produced, recycled or recyclable products, as well as ecotourism.

McLelland (2008) sees a new “green frontier” in the world of work with a particular environmental emphasis which includes opportunities in traditional environmental sciences, natural resource management industries, emerging green industries, traditional industries greening their products and services, and traditional companies becoming sustainable.

In one of the most recent analyses, the Globe Foundation (2010) spells out some of the industries McLelland may be referring to:

- Clean & alternative energy – including renewable energy, bioenergy and fuel cells.
- Energy management & efficiency – including energy storage, transmission infrastructure, energy-efficient lighting and heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC), and public transportation
- Green building – including building and community design, green construction, infrastructure and real estate.

- Environmental protection – including some elements of agriculture and silviculture, remediation, pollution control, and environmental consulting/engineering.
- Carbon finance & investment – including carbon management, offset markets and venture capital.
- Green knowledge and support – including research and development, advanced education and training, law, information and communications technology (ICT), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the public sector.

Finally, keep in mind that the growth and change will not be limited to conventional employment. Pollard (2008) provides many examples of how entrepreneurs can find opportunities in the current situation to provide a range of services and goods, but at the same time find fulfillment in the knowledge that they are a meaningful part of moving the world, in some small way, toward a more sustainable path.

Challenges Affecting SECOs

One of the challenges that will affect the growth and development of sustainability enhancing career options will be how the business world will respond. Even with the growth of self-employment in general, and the broad range of sustainable entrepreneur opportunities envisioned by Pollard (2008), it is likely that

businesses will continue to be the majority employer unless there is complete breakdown in our social and financial structures. Unlike health care, where there is demographic certainty of growth and need, it is at best a near certainty when it comes to our need to move away from the path of environmental, social and economic unsustainability. Business, by its nature, is about profit but it may still take time until they are certain there is financially viable demand before taking genuine leadership positions. Business has readily joined the green parade but not many are yet at the front of the procession directing its course.

Hemmelman (2011), speaking in particular about the green energy sector, makes the point that even though there is clearly more demand now than even in the recent past, a challenge for emerging industries is that they are based more on projected than established demand. Some industries and business leaders have longer range vision than others, and different tolerances for risk. Business will also be looking to post-secondary schools to step-up in short order to help supply them with grads who possess the skills, knowledge and values inherent in SECOs.

How these schools assimilate sustainability into programs and curriculum may be another challenge. Marcinkowshi (2010) documents how, even in a relevant field of study like Environmental Education it has been no straightforward matter to integrate sustainability. Much of the problem, says Marcinkowski,



comes down to defining sustainability and sustainable development. But on the other end of the spectrum, and as evidence that it must surely be possible, Konopnicki (2009) describes how a public school board went about adopting sustainability as a core skill and incorporating it into their curriculum and their strategic plan, and how they specifically recognized the importance of awareness of future generations. Konopnicki suggests it should be weaved into all programs of study at all levels.

Another possible challenge is whether SECOs are likely to require increased amounts of higher education. Some careers which happen to be highly skill- or knowledge-intensive will indeed require more education but Katz (2012) lists significant numbers of in-demand entry-level opportunities in renewable energy and energy conservation requiring less than a post-secondary degree. Katz also points out that these opportunities are ripe for putting youth to work, and with the side benefit that they can feel they are making a difference in the world.

A Time For Action

A Chinese proverb reminds us of the obvious: If we don't change direction, we will end up exactly where we are headed. According to Laszlo (2009) in his book *Worldshift2012*, now is a time for activism: a time for personal activism because everything that everyone does affects the world and everything that lives in it, now more than ever as the world

becomes ever-increasingly interconnected; a time for media activism when relevance should take precedence over sensationalistic; a time for business activism because even "private" business affects the broad public, and that public should take actions to affect and direct business. People, business and governments all need to take responsibility if we hope to make the world more sustainable and retain any hope that humanity might perpetuate. According to Aburdene (2007), more and more people are expecting and demanding corporate responsibility. Aburdene foresees a move away from greed and toward spirituality, social awareness, emphasis on values, and community service for the corporations themselves and for their employees.

If more and more people are desiring corporate and political responsibility when it comes to sustainability, they may well be expecting a capacity for such sensitivity from their career development practitioners too. After all, as professionals we owe it to our clients to remain current on what is emerging in the career spectrum, and careers take place within a context that includes all three pillars of sustainability. Perhaps not realizing the prophecy his words would have, Plant (1999) predicted that green career development would move up the professional hierarchy. He explored the question, does career counselling "pay", with its potential for short- and long-term payback to society and the world? "There is global evidence of the need to make sustainable career choices: pollution, over-con-

sumption in some areas and fundamental needs in others... scarce water resources... ozone holes... the list is endless. A change of paradigm is needed," wrote Plant in making recommendations for the advancement of green career development. That was almost 15 years ago.

Saukkonen & Parkkinen (2011) discuss how individuals who conceive of themselves as part of a generational continuum have duties to both their predecessors and descendants and argue therefore that the ethics of lifelong guidance should be based on the principles of sustainable development. Saukkonen & Parkkinen further make that case that even though educational and vocational guidance is an individualistic activity, it is time for guidance practitioners to take a stand on global matters affecting humanity as a whole, and to help link that individualistic way of thinking with a larger perspective on the community, both local and worldwide. So when we are called upon by our clients, or others who may seek advice or consult our expertise when it comes to sustainability and careers, let's be ready. We can't have all the answers but we should have tools and resources, as well as a holistic notion that includes "green" careers but also goes beyond them to demonstrate how many types of work can have a positive impact on sustainability. As career development practitioners, we have a responsibility and an important part to play in the solution.

That it is the time for us to act, and to act today, is driven home in the solemn caution



posed by Flannery (2009), “it is all too possible that we will fail to achieve sustainability, and that the blind watchmaker will once again—through variation of organisms and through failure of ill-adapted organisms to reproduce—reset the balance of a severely diminished living earth.” For us as practitioners, engaged in the profession of helping people explore and develop careers, Power Scott (2010) offers a optimistic context for the growth of SECOs: “It’s a green revolution. Concern for the environment is making its way into all our lives and almost every profession. Companies need smart, talented, creative people—and lots of them—to keep up with all that change.”

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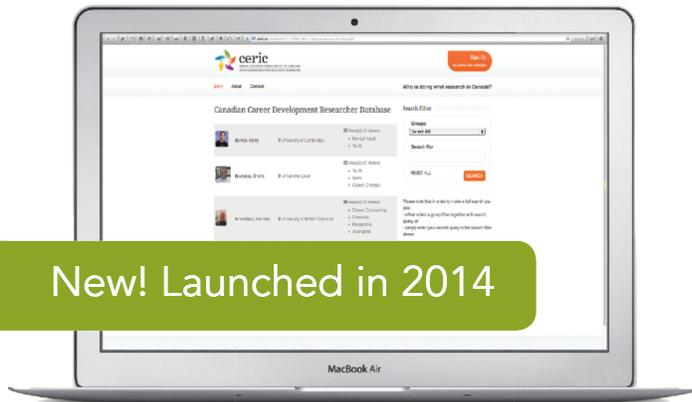


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Training Pre-Service Teachers in Career Education: Developing Foundational Perceptions, Knowledge and Skills

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Abstract

Students in the K-12 educational system benefit from access to high quality career support (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). However, students report that they are not able to access effective career services (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). Either this support is unavailable or if it is available it is ineffective (Domene, Shapka, & Keating, 2006; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). This article describes a pilot project offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge that seeks to address these issues. Through this pilot project pre-service teachers receive training in career education and learn to infuse career support in regular curriculum. This article examines the findings of a research project that investigated whether this pilot project effectively prepares pre-service teachers to integrate career education into regular curriculum. The findings suggest that this pilot project helped pre-service teachers acquire the perspectives and skills required to effectively support students in their career explorations and planning.

Young people are dissatisfied with the career support they receive during their Kindergarten-Grade 12 educational experience (Campbell & Ungar, 2008; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). There are two probable reasons why students are dissatisfied. In the first place, students are often not able to access career support (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). In the second place, when they are able to access career support they report that the support they receive is ineffective (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). The following section explores the reasons for students' dissatisfaction with the career support provided in K-12 schools. Following this discussion, solutions will be proposed to improving the accessibility and quality of career support provided to students in the K-12 educational system.

Sources of Dissatisfaction With Career Support

Many studies suggest that students in the K-12 educational system are unable to access career services and sup-

port (Campbell & Ungar, 2008; Domene, Shapka & Keating, 2006; Green & Keys, 2001; Niles & Harris-Bowsbey, 2005; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004; Rosenbaum & Person, 2003; Whiston, 2002). Students receive little, if any, occupation-related information, career information, or career guidance during their school experience (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). Guidance counsellors at the elementary, middle and high school levels spend very little time providing career counselling and career assessment services (Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). They are stretched to the limit due to discrepancies between the large number of students and the limited number of available counsellors (Green & Keys, 2001; Whiston, 2002) and they spend the majority of their time attending to issues such as crisis counselling, discipline issues, academic failure, course planning, and university/college admission (Domene, Shapka, & Keating, 2006; Feller, 2003; Niles & Harris-Bowsbey, 2005; Rosenbaum & Person, 2003). As a result, very little time is devoted to providing preventative, comprehensive career support services. In fact, many young



people are even unaware that guidance counsellors can help them with their career-related needs (Domene et al., 2006).

Exacerbating students' difficulties in accessing career services and support is that fact that when they are able to access services they often do not find them useful. The *Career Needs Research Project* conducted in Southern Alberta examined the career planning perceptions, understandings and needs of students in Grades 7-12 (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). This study showed that although the vast majority of students in junior high and senior high see the value of engaging in career planning, they do not perceive those working in the educational system as particularly beneficial in assisting them in this endeavor (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). For example, only 11% of junior high students report that the career counselling provided by guidance counsellors is helpful (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002).

One likely reason why students express dissatisfaction with the quality of the career support they receive in schools is that those providing these services rarely receive any training in career education or career development. For example, a survey conducted in Southern Alberta with teachers who teach career curriculum (Career and Life Management – a mandatory course Alberta students usually take in Grade 11), school coun-

sellors, and health teachers asked participants: "What training do you have in career development?" Fifty-nine percent of the CALM teachers, school counsellors and health teachers who participated in the survey stated that they had no formal training, 37.5% reported that they had some professional development workshops or in-service training, and less than 2% of participants reported having either a certificate or diploma in career development (Witko, Bernes, Magnusson & Bardick, 2006). It is perhaps because of this lack of training that only 33% of Alberta high school students rated the CALM course as helpful (Witko et al., 2006). It is also perhaps because of this lack of training that students do not find the career support they receive valuable.

Another likely reason why students are dissatisfied with the career support they receive in schools is that the support is often based on traditional paradigms of career interventions. The two major paradigms for career intervention in the twenty-first century were vocational guidance and career education. These paradigms are based on a set of assumptions about career development and decision making including:

- Everything is fixed – stable and unchanging.
- Choice is a matter of rationality.
- Logic is the best decision-making style.
- All the relevant informa-

tion that is needed for a decision can be known.

- There is only one best decision. The process of career development is an orderly pattern of progression.
- Indecision is bad and decidedness is good.
- Making a decision does not affect the context in which the decision is made.
- Choice is about a long-term goal such as "the career".
- Choice implementation must be practical – grounded in reality. Commitment is necessary to overcome obstacles in the way of realizing one's choice.
- Other possibilities are dangerous distractions from the achievement of the original goal. (Pryor & Bright, 2011)

The emphasis on long-term goal setting, stability and predictability and rational choice (characteristic of the traditional paradigm) is reflected in the kinds of career services students receive in the K-12 educational system. Such services emphasize testing and matching, one-time decision-making, and provide career support as an ancillary service best accessed near the end of high school. For this reason, career services in schools continue to prioritize formal career assessments (Campbell & Ungar, 2008) and typically provide services through access to a guidance counsellor and



through marginal integration of career planning in the curriculum provided at the later stages of student's education (for example, the Province of Alberta mandates all high school students to take a course in Career and Life Management – usually in Grade 11).

However, the assumptions that underlie the traditional paradigm do not reflect the realities of career planning in the twenty-first century world of work and do not support the types of career support students require. Whereas previously the world of work was characterized by stability, security, and predictability, the world of work in the twenty-first century is described as unstable, insecure and unpredictable (Guichard, 2009; Jarvis, 2006; Kallenberg, 2009; Hartung, Porfeli & Vondracek, 2008; Robinson, 2011; Van Vianen, De Pater & Preenan, 2009). In this context, career planning is not a one-time activity that relies exclusively on rationality and logic. Rather, it is a lifelong process of managing change and often involves capitalizing on serendipity and intuition. As stated in the Government of Alberta's (2011) document "Inspiring Action on Education",

[Students in the twenty-first century] seek opportunities for personal and professional growth, explore career possibilities and plan accordingly as they confront challenges and adapt to change. They are self-directed and self-aware, using this knowl-

edge to make responsible personal choices and decisions. (p.5)

The career interventions provided to students need to reflect the realities of the 21st century world of work and they need to be geared towards cultivating adaptability.

As Savickas (2005) argues, individuals in the twenty-first century need to:

- Develop concern about their future as a worker;
- Increase personal control over their vocational future;
- Display curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios; and,
- Strengthen the confidence to pursue their aspirations. (p.52)

Savickas (2005) develops these ideas further by stating to thrive in the twenty-first century world of work individuals need to develop career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence. Career concern means that individuals develop a future orientation and a sense that it is important to prepare for tomorrow. In describing career concern Savickas (2005) writes, "Attitudes of planfulness and optimism foster a sense of concern because they dispose individuals to become aware of the vocational tasks and occupational transitions to be faced and choices to be made in the imminent and distant future" (p. 52). Career control means individuals de-

velop an understanding that they both feel and believe they are responsible for constructing their careers (Savickas, 2005). Career curiosity refers to inquisitiveness about and exploration of the fit between self and the work world (Savickas, 2005). In describing career curiosity Savickas (2005) comments that it is vital because it "provides a fund of knowledge with which to make choices that fit self to situation" (Savickas, 2005, p. 55). Finally, career confidence "denotes feelings of self-efficacy concerning the ability to successfully execute a course of action needed to make and implement suitable educational and vocational choices" (Savickas, 2005, p. 56).

Competencies such as career concern, career control, career curiosity, and career confidence exemplify the kinds of competencies students require in order to thrive in their careers/lives in the twenty-first century. Students recognize the changing realities of the world of work and the need to develop the competencies to successfully navigate these realities (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). They indicate a desire for more occupational and personal exploration provided throughout their educational experience (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). As well, they express a desire to "develop a future orientation" (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002; Savickas, 2005). The career support provided to students in the K-12 educational system needs to foster



these capacities and needs to be based on new paradigms of career interventions that emphasize these capacities.

In summary, students express dissatisfaction with the career support they receive during their K-12 education. This dissatisfaction may be caused by the lack of training in career interventions provided to those who deliver career support in schools. It may also be caused by the lack of accessibility students experience when seeking career support. As well, it may be caused by the reliance of career services on traditional paradigms of career interventions.

Solutions to Address Student Dissatisfaction with Career Support

Some potentially effective solutions to address the dissatisfaction expressed by students include:

- Increase the accessibility of career services by infusing career into the regular curriculum through training teachers in career interventions.
- Provide pre-service teachers with training in career interventions.
- Provide career intervention training according to relevant and appropriate career theories.

The following section will describe these recommendations in detail.

Provide Career Support Within Existing Curriculum

Career support needs to be provided in a comprehensive fashion rather than as a marginal activity (for example, provided simply as one course at the end of a student's K-12 educational experience or through limited engagement with a guidance counsellor). As Gypers (2001) states, "A fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counselling program would best serve the needs of students. When offered in this fashion, guidance and counselling can be an integral and transformative program, not a marginal and supplementary activity" (p. 13). Witko, Bernes, Magnusson, & Bardick (2006) similarly argue that integrating career interventions throughout the K-12 curriculum would be an effective way to address current career concerns. According to Witko et al. (2006), implementing an integrated career curriculum would involve creating career curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and contains a variety of career planning information tailored to students' needs. As these authors suggest, a curriculum that effectively supports students in their career/life construction is one that is comprehensive and integrated throughout the K-12 educational experience. Rathman (2010) describes the value of integrating career guidance into regular curriculum by stating:

In my view, schools should not leave students

to 'dabble' in a variety of extracurricular classes, activities and experiences with the hope that students will magically discover their individual purposes, their sense of identity, and their ability to function in society. Instead, schools should take a proactive approach to self-knowledge by offering a curriculum designed to help students discover individual assets, attributes, gifts and values...Students then may be able to choose and learn and to do the things in school that will help them materialize the futures they have decided they want. (p. 234)

As is clear, one major recommendation from experts in the field of career counselling to improve the quality of career support in schools is to integrate career education in a systematic and comprehensive fashion throughout the K-12 educational experience.

Provide Pre-service Teachers with Training in Career Education

In order to integrate career planning into regular curriculum it is imperative that teachers receive training in career interventions. As Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson, Gunn, Bardick, Orr, & McKnight (2008) state, "Considering that students would like support from school counsellors and teachers during their career planning, [the results of our



study] indicate a need for improved career training for school professionals in addition to improved access to effective career planning resources (p. 93). Rathman (2010) similarly comments, "I suggest that the role of teachers expand to include guiding students in knowledge of themselves. Such knowledge can help students plan a future in which they explore their unique selves, identify their own aspirations and goals, and contribute to the world beyond themselves" (p. 239).

Teachers play a critically important role in supporting students in their career/life construction. As Noddings (2003) writes,

The best educational guidance is a product of a shared life, not of highly specialized assessment. Professional guidance counselors have much to contribute in school settings, but they are not best positioned to guide the selection of courses and tracks for particular students. For this task, we need teachers who know their students ... Teachers who have worked with students closely should know something about their aspirations, work habits, character and personality. When a relationship of care and trust has been established, a teacher can talk frankly with students about their goals and plans. (p. 205)

As Noddings points out, teachers often spend a great deal of time with students, get to know their students well, and form relationships of trust with students. They are therefore in an advantageous position to support them in their career/life construction.

Teachers also play a critical role in student's career construction because students are often unable to access effective support in other relationships. Although young people report that non-professionals such as family members, friends, and employers are beneficial sources of information, advice, and encouragement, very few young people report that they received guidance about choosing an occupation beyond "do what makes you happy" (Ungar & Campbell, 2008). Although children frequently turn to parents for career development support (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2005), parents report that they are unsure of how to provide effective assistance to their children (Downing & D'Andrea, 1994); They also report that they require greater assistance to help them provide the kinds of effective career planning support their children require (Bardick et al., 2005). Although it would seem that a child's best source of career support would come from his/her home and family, this is often not the case. As Rathman (2010) comments,

When asked where acquisition of self-knowledge should happen, many people respond that it should

happen at home. In a perfect world, perhaps that would be correct. However, for the vast majority of young people, such self-learning conversations are not happening at home for a myriad of reasons...Indeed, as a result of the increasingly pervasive modern family structure, self-knowledge must become part of the mission of educating at school. School is the only equalizing factor in EVERY child's life. It is the only place where each child, no matter what type of family he or she comes from, can be exposed to a variety of adults who could guide and mentor him or her toward making positive life choices. (p. 236-237)

Training teachers to provide effective career support ensures that all students have access to the guidance they require to construct their careers/lives.

It is important to note that teachers often acknowledge that they have an important role to play in assisting students in their career construction; however, many feel unprepared to take on this role (Rathman, 2010). As Rathman (2010) reveals,

Many teachers need extensive training before they will feel comfortable leading meaningful and lengthy discussions that are not academically focused. Some teachers naturally mentor and speak to all aspects of their students' lives, but many are



uncomfortable, unpracticed or unfamiliar with diverse aspects of the development of young people. (p. 238)

Certainly, in order to embed career planning throughout the K-12 educational experience, teachers need to be trained in career education. As Rathman (2010) further writes, "...We cannot expect teachers to take on this added role of facilitating self-understanding without first providing considerable training and scaffolding" (p. 238). Doing so will ensure that career education and guidance is not left only to specialist career guidance staff, but is instead supported by all members of the teaching staff.

Base Career Education Training on Modern Career Paradigms

It is also critically important that any career education training provided to teachers is based on new theories of career interventions. New theories of career intervention have been proposed to more effectively meet the needs of people in the twenty-first century. Training in career interventions provided to teachers needs to reflect the tenets proposed by these theories. These include:

- Systems theory;
- Career construction theory;
- Life design;
- Chaos theory; and

- Culture-infused counselling.

I will briefly discuss each of these in turn.

Systems theory. Patton and McMahon (2006) have characterized their "Systems Theory Framework of Career Development and Counseling" (STF) as a metatheoretical framework for career theory. They construct their theory as an "overarching theory within which all concepts of career development described in the plethora of career theories can be usefully positioned and utilized in theory and practice" (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 154). The significance of STF is that it creates an awareness of the multiple factors that influence career development. Whereas traditional career theory has tended to focus on specific discrete concepts relevant to individual career behaviour (to the exclusion of other important factors), STF provides a framework for considering the myriad factors that influence career behaviour (McMahon, 2011; Patton & McMahon, 2006). STF emphasizes the plethora of influences that impact an individual's career trajectory – influences such as the individual system, the individual's social system, as well as the broader environmental/societal system (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The individual system includes such elements as gender, health, disability, personality, world of work knowledge, ethnicity, self-concept, etc. (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The broader environ-

mental/societal system includes such elements as the employment market, globalization, socioeconomic status, political decisions, geographical location, and others. These systems are also located within the context of time (for example, the past influences the present and together the past and present influence the future) and are affected by chance (Patton & McMahon, 2006). As all of this suggests, STF rightly presents career development as a dynamic process that is influenced by process influences, recursiveness, change over time, and chance (McMahon, 2011; Patton & McMahon, 2006). This theory offers an extremely useful perspective because it recognizes the complexity individuals face when constructing a career/life in a complex world.

Career construction theory. Career construction theory is based on personal constructivism and social constructionism. Its basic premise is that careers do not unfold (a notion favored in traditional theories); rather, they are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of work roles (Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory asserts that individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences. The term career, then, denotes "a subjective construction that imposes personal



meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a life theme that patterns the individual's work life" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). This approach is vastly different than traditional approaches to career interventions because it emphasizes identity rather than personality, adaptability rather than maturity, intentionality rather than decidedness, and stories rather than scores (Savickas, 2012). As Pryor & Bright (2011) comment, "Counselling is not about discerning a good match between the person and the occupation, but rather it is about assisting individuals to identify and utilize their life themes through narrative telling and then actively constructing the future" (p. 20).

Life designing. The "Life Designing" (Savickas, 2012) theory of career counselling is built upon the premise that, as a result of the unpredictability and instability of the twenty-first century, workers need to develop skills and competencies that differ substantially from the knowledge and abilities required by twentieth century occupations. Individuals need to become lifelong learners who can "use sophisticated technologies, embrace flexibility rather than stability, maintain employability, and create their own opportunities" (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 240). This theory of counselling emphasizes career construction throughout the lifespan of an individual. The use of the term "career con-

struction" highlights the notion that individuals progressively design and build their lives/careers.

Chaos theory of careers. The "Chaos Theory of Careers" emphasizes the need for theories of career counselling to address the "realities of the contemporary experience of the 21st century students and workers" (Pryor & Bright, 2003, p.121). Chaos theory recognizes the "sheer complexity and range of potential influences on people's careers" (Pryor & Bright, 2003, p. 121) as well as the nonlinear nature of careers in the twenty-first century. Bright & Prior also note, "In chaos theory, the future is conceptualized not principally as some place or time out on the horizon; rather, the future is essentially an individual's next thought, work or action" (2005, p. 53).

The "Chaos Theory of Careers" also emphasizes the Dynamic, interactive and adaptive nature of human functioning in the world and in making career decisions and taking career action...the tendency of humans to construe and construct experiences and perceptions into meaningful and often unique interpretive structures for understanding themselves, their experiences and their world...[and it recognizes the fact] that human experience and career development in particular, tends to be laced with unplanned and unpredictable events and experiences which are often crucial and sometimes determinative in the nar-

rative of people's careers... (Pryor & Bright, 2003, p. 121).

Chaos theory identifies four cornerstone constructs:

- Complexity;
- Change;
- Chance;
- Construction.

The construct "complexity" recognizes the "multiplicity of influences in career decision making" (Bright & Pryor, 2011, p. 163). As well, this construct recognizes that these influences are "interconnected and have the potential to interact in unpredictable ways" (Bright & Pryor, 2011, p. 163). The construct "change" highlights the impacts and effects of change in peoples' lives. The construct "chance" emphasizes the impact that chance has on peoples' careers/lives. Finally, the construct "construction" addresses the opportunities presented by "the lack of ultimate control or predictability" (Bright & Pryor, 2011, p. 164) inherent in life. As Bright & Pryor (2011) express, "The lack of ultimate control or predictability opens up the opportunity for individuals to become active participants in the creation of their futures rather than pawns in a rigidly deterministic system of cause and effect" (p. 164).

Culture-infused counselling. Educators providing career support to students in a twenty-first century classroom in Canada are confronted by a mosaic of people with different customs and cul-



tures (Arthur & Collins, 2010). In order to effectively serve such a diverse population, educators need to gain cultural self-awareness, awareness of client cultural identities, and an understanding of how to develop a culturally sensitive working alliance with students (Arthur & Collins, 2011). Cultural self-awareness involves reflecting on how one's personal culture influences one's view of work, life roles, beliefs about success, and personal agency (Arthur & Collins, 2011). Awareness of student cultural identities involves "understanding the organizational, social, economic, and political contexts that affect presenting concerns; [student] career development behaviour; and [student] perspectives on the meaning and relevance of career-related interventions" (Arthur & Collins, 2011, p. 148). Such awareness goes beyond understanding and extends to selecting interventions that "go beyond helping [students] cope and adapt to oppressive conditions that contribute to work and career barriers in the first place" (Arthur & Collins, 2011, p. 148). Finally, developing a culturally sensitive working alliance involves understanding how to form a collaborative, trusting and respectful relationship with students that values the students' goals and culture and works to address the "systematic and social power disparities that limit [students] from reaching their full potential" (Arthur & Collins, 2011, p. 148). Educa-

tors who develop these competencies are well positioned to support the diverse array of students under their care and have the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all students are effectively supported in constructing flourishing lives.

In summary, students express an inability to access effective career support during their K-12 educational experience. However, in order to thrive in the twenty-first century world of work they require access to such support. In particular, they require access to comprehensive career support throughout their educational experience, integrated into regular curriculum and supported by teachers who have a strong understanding of how to effectively support students to build careers and lives in the context of the twenty-first century world of work. A pilot project offered by members of the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge seeks to provide pre-service teachers with the foundation to provide this kind of support. The following section will describe this pilot project.

Career Education Pilot Project

The goal of the *Career Coaching Across the Curriculum pilot project* was to train pre-service teachers to integrate career interventions into curriculum and to provide them with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to prepare, and deliver, career interventions in the K-12 educational

system.

The pilot project contained two components. The Career Education course was offered over four weekends. The first three weekends were designed to provide pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills they require to effectively integrate career interventions into regular curriculum. The fourth weekend provided pre-service teachers the opportunity to present lesson plans, unit plans, and school wide interventions they developed to their peers. Through sharing their work with their peers pre-service teachers were provided an opportunity to receive feedback on the career intervention lesson plans, unit plans, or school wide interventions they planned to implement in their internship experiences. Table 1 identifies the topics covered in the first three weekends.

As Table 1 identifies, the Career Education course endeavored to provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to effectively support students in their career construction. During the first weekend, students learned about modern, relevant career theories. In addition, they were introduced to fundamental skills required to support students effectively exploring career concerns. Finally, in the first weekend, pre-service teachers engaged in a discussion about desired outcomes in career interventions.



Table 1

Career Education Course Topics

Weekend #1	Weekend #2	Weekend #3
Career theorists	Discussion of initiation strategies	Self-portraits exercise
Career counselling skills	Guided imagery exercise	Discussion of career decision-making process
General counselling process	Ninety-nine year old question exercise	Discussion of exploration strategies
Career counselling skills triad exercise	Pride story exercise	Discussion of decision-making strategies
World of work in the 21 st century	Exploring past experiences exercise	Discussion of preparation (action-planning) strategies
Career counselling outcomes	Discussion of formal career assessments	Discussion of implementation strategies
Career counselling process	Discussion of semi-formal career assessments Discussion of informal career assessments	

In the second weekend, pre-service teachers learned about practical interventions to utilize with students to engage them in the process of considering their careers/lives (called initiation). These activities are designed to get students excited about possible futures and possible selves. They are also designed to help students acquire self-knowledge through the exploration of interests, aptitudes, significant experiences, personality features, personal dreams and goals, and sources of meaning. Pre-service teachers were also provided an overview of the various types of assessments available to them to assist students in exploring their interests, aptitudes, and personalities.

In the third weekend, pre-service teachers learned about practical interventions to implement with students in

order to explore the world of work and make tentative career decisions and plans (exploration, decision-making, action planning, and implementation of action plans). Pre-service teachers learned practical strategies for assisting students in exploring possibilities in the world of work. They also learned how to assist students in making career-related decisions, how to help students develop goals, and how to prepare students to pursue their goals in the context of the twenty-first century world of work.

In the fourth weekend, pre-service teachers presented lesson plans, unit plans, or school wide interventions they developed as part of a major assignment in the class. They received feedback from their peers and from their instructor about the strengths and weaknesses of their planned inter-

ventions and they were afforded the opportunity to reflect on their interventions in advance of their internship experience (where they will have to deliver their lesson plans, unit plans, or school wide interventions to students).

The *Career Coaching Across the Curriculum* pilot project also included an internship experience for pre-service teachers. The internship experience was meant to provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers who had successfully completed the career education course to transmit the knowledge and skills they acquired in the career education course to students through specialized curriculum. This internship experience was offered as a half-time (12 week) teaching internship in a school placement in an elementary, middle, or high school in Southern Alberta. During the internship, pre-service teachers were engaged in professional study under the direction of a Faculty Mentor. The pre-service teachers' internships were centered on their teaching major (English Language Arts, Physical Education, for example) but required the integration of a special unit on career into their practicum experience. During the internship, I conducted two rounds of interviews with each pre-service teacher – one at the beginning of the internship experience and one at the end of the internship experience.

The research described in this article investigates whether the Career Coaching Across the Curriculum pilot



project (and the Career Education course in particular) is successful in providing effective career intervention training to pre-service teachers. Specifically, the research described in this article examines whether pre-service teachers experienced growth in their career intervention knowledge, skills and perceptions as a result of taking the Career Education class. It also examines whether pre-service teachers grew in their confidence to engage in the provision of career support to students in the Kindergarten-Grade 12 educational system. As well, it investigates whether pre-service teachers made important shifts in their perspectives on careers that reflect the realities of the twenty-first century world of work and modern career theories.

Method

Participants

Eligibility to participate in the Career Education course was limited to students who had successfully completed the first and second semesters of a cohort-based teacher preparation program in the Faculty of Education. Completion of both semesters entails a total of 11 mandatory courses and two (five and six week) practica spanning elementary and secondary contexts, respectively. Interested participants were then required to apply for the career education specialization. Courses were offered in May/June and September/Oc-

tober of 2009 and 2010. Forty-seven students were accepted into the four available Career Education cohorts. The same male professor in the faculty of career education provided course instruction for all four cohorts thereby ensuring reliability and continuity.

Procedure

As stated earlier, courses were offered over four weekends. Each class attended to various understandings and issues surrounding career counselling. To create baseline data, a pre-test of career counselling knowledge and perceptions was administered at the outset of the course. To demonstrate growth and change in perceptions, the same questionnaire was re-administered at the conclusion of the course. Additional data collection involved a formative evaluation of lectures and activities administered at three separate junctures in the course, and a summative assessment administered after the final class. Although not included in this article, two interviews were conducted with each pre-service teacher during their internship experience, while students in the K-12 educational system completed a research questionnaire after participating in the career education lesson plans, unit plans and school wide interventions provided to them by the pre-service teachers during the internships.

Instruments

The Career Counselling Knowledge Questionnaire was researcher developed. It contained three sections including Demographical Information (i.e., age and gender); Previous Knowledge (i.e., career counselling courses, personal experiences, knowledge of theorists, and inventories); and Perceptions (i.e., 13, five point Likert response questions ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree on questions concerning career preferences, selections, and planning).

The Weekend Exit Surveys were also researcher generated. They were two part response questions based on the content for the weekend. The first section asked the student to determine whether they had "Participated Fully", "Somewhat Participated", or "Didn't Participate" in the topic/exercise. The student was then asked on a five point Likert scale whether they found the topic/exercise to be "not useful", "not really useful, but almost there", "minimally useful (but still OK otherwise it would be 0 or 1)", "somewhere between minimally useful and extremely useful", or "extremely useful".

The Summary Evaluation for the course was also researcher generated. It was a split response format that asked the student to address a statement regarding understandings and knowledge of career counselling. The student was asked on a five point Likert whether "Before taking this



class....” his or her understanding or knowledge was anywhere from “unacceptable” (i.e., 1, 2) to “acceptable” (i.e., 3, 4, 5). This same scale was used on the second portion of the question that asked “After taking this class.....” his or her understanding or knowledge ranged from “unacceptable” to “acceptable”.

Data Analysis Plan

To address the research questions, initial descriptive statistics were computed to explore frequencies, central tendencies, variability, and distributional qualities of the variable of interest. Following preliminary analysis, Pearson Chi-Square analyses and Wilcoxon’s Signed Ranks tests were employed to test the non-parametric outcomes of the surveys. All analyses were conducted using version 19 of IBM SPSS Statistical package.

Results

Demographical Information

Descriptive frequency counts were calculated for participants. For the purposes of explanation, students are organized according to Gender and Age (Table 2). Forty-seven undergraduate students were enrolled in four sections of the Career Education course. As see in Table 2, the majority of participants were females between the ages of 20 to 24.

Table 2

Summary of PSIII Career Education Student Age and Gender Frequencies

Age	Female	Male	Total
20-24	26	3	29
25-29	5	3	8
30-34	4	0	4
35-39	1	0	1
40 or over	3	2	5

*N = 47

Table 3

Summary of PSIII Career Education Student Previous Knowledge

	f*	
	Yes	No
Number of students who have taken a previous course regarding Career Counselling	4	43
Number of students who have previous personal experience with Career Counselling (i.e., test, counselling, career fair, etc.)	43	4

* N = 47

Prior Knowledge Questionnaire

To determine changes in career counselling knowledge and perceptions, students were required to complete the prior knowledge questionnaire at the start of the course, and on the last day of the course. Students were asked whether they had taken a previous course on career counselling or whether they had personal experience in career counselling. Table 3 provided descriptive information that identified the lack of previous academic career counselling knowledge in contrast with notable personal ex-

periences with career counselling.

In regards to perceptions of career counselling prior to the commencement of the course, Pearson chi-square analyses were conducting using age. Several question responses were found to be significant (see Table 4).

Upon examination of the cells, significantly more 20 to 24 year old and 25 to 29 year old students chose “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” in response to question #1, asking whether selecting a career is a one-time activity. The 20 to 24 year students also significantly chose “Disagree” in response to



Table 4

Summary of Significant Chi-Square Analyses using Student Teacher's Age and Responses on the Pre-Perception Questionnaire

Question	Value*
#1. Choosing a career is a one-time activity that remains relevant throughout your life	29.29
#5. When selecting a career path, the most important consideration is whether there is a high demand for workers in the occupation you are considering.	38.49
#9. Career planning is an important activity	16.35
#12. Schools are currently doing a good job in assisting students in their career development.	28.46

* χ^2 (16, N=47), $p < .05$

Table 5

Summary of Significant Chi-Square Analyses using Student Teacher's Age and Responses on the Post-Perception Questionnaire

Question	Value*
#6. Today's world of work is predictable and stable.	21.96
#11. Teachers can play a substantial role in assisting their students in their career planning.	28.21

* χ^2 (8, N=47), $p < .05$

question #5 regarding selecting a career path in high demand for workers; "Disagree" and "Slightly Agree" for question #12 that asks whether schools are doing a good job in assisting students in career development; and "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" for question #9 that asks whether career planning is an important activity.

There were fewer significant responses on the perception questionnaire following completion of the course (see Table 5).

Again, the 20 to 24 year old students significantly selected "Strongly Disagree" and

"Disagree" in response to question #6 asking whether today's world of work is predictable and stable, and "Strongly Agree" in response to question #11 asking whether teachers play a substantial role in assisting students in career planning.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were calculated between the pre-perception to post-perception responses. Several significant changes in perceptions were detected (see Table 6).

For all question responses the students demonstrated a significant change in perception regarding the importance of career counselling

and the need to be flexible in regards to career change. With the exception of question #9, the students shifted from selecting "Disagree" for their pre-perception responses to "Strongly Disagree" for their post-perception responses. In regards to question #9, the students significantly shifted from selected "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" when asked whether career planning is important.

Weekend Course Content Evaluations

Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted on Weekends #1 (Table 7), #2 (Table 8), and #3 (Table 9) exit surveys. For all three of the weekend exit surveys, those students who reported that they "Participated Fully" in the activities also significantly reported that they found the following activities to be "Extremely Useful".

Summary Evaluation

Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were utilized to compare student self-evaluations in knowledge and understandings of career counselling from "Before taking this class....." to "After taking this class.....". Significant changes were detected on all questions (Table 10).

The following section will discuss the implications of this research study.



Table 6

Summary of Significant Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests from Pre-Perception to Post-Perception

Question	Mean		Z
	Pre-	Post-	
#1. Choosing a career is a one-time activity that remains relevant throughout your life.	.78	.21	-3.41
#2. The most effective way to select a career path is to complete a career interest inventory or a career aptitude test.	1.42	.67	-4.48
#3. The main goal of career planning is to determine the perfect occupational match.	1.82	1.52	-2.07
#4. The most important goal of helping students with career planning is to let students to make a decision about the occupation they want to pursue.	2.08	1.34	-3.41
#5. When selecting a career path, the most important consideration is whether there is a high demand for workers in the occupation you are considering.	1.14	.73	-2.73
#6. Today's world of work is predictable and stable.	.53	.32	-2.23
#8. Your career begins after you complete your college or university education.	1.19	.80	-2.60
#9. Career planning is an important activity.	3.53	4.00	-4.26
#12. Schools are currently doing a good job in assisting students in their career development.	1.42	1.17	-2.04

$p < .05$ (two tailed)

Table 7

Summary of Significant Chi-Square Analyses using Student Teacher's Declared Level of Participation and Usefulness on Week Course Content: Weekend #1

Topics	Value*
Career Counselling Skills	7.12*
General Counselling Process	6.86*
World of Work in the 21 st Century	10.02**
Career Counselling Outcomes	11.78**

* χ^2 (2, N=45), $p < .05$

** χ^2 (4, N=45), $p < .05$

Discussion

As indicated earlier, students in the K-12 educational system need to develop critical competencies to thrive in the

21st century world of work. It appears that in the current milieu, students are not being provided the opportunity to develop these competencies. One promising solution to this problem involves providing ca-

reer education training to pre-service teachers. As the results of this study seem to suggest, providing such training to pre-service teachers assists them in developing critical attitudes, perspectives, knowledge and skills essential to providing effective career planning support to students.

Through their participation in the Career Education class, pre-service teachers reported that they experienced important changes in perceptions. More specifically, by the end of the course the majority of pre-service teachers strengthened their perception that schools could do a better job of assisting students in their career development and they strengthened their perception that teachers can play a substantial role in assisting students in their career development. As well, they strengthened their perception that career planning is an important, life-long activity (not a one-time activity) and that personal meaning is a fundamentally important consideration when making career decisions (as opposed to only making career decisions based upon labour market information). Finally, they strengthened their perception that the world of work is unpredictable and unstable and therefore necessitates that students develop competencies to effectively manage change. At the outset, younger pre-service teachers (as compared to older pre-service teachers) more strongly endorsed certain career perspectives (for example, the in-



Table 8

Summary of Significant Chi-Square Analyses using Student Teacher's Declared Level of Participation and Usefulness on Week Course Content: Weekend #2

Topics	Value
Discussion of Initiation Strategies	12.86*
Guided Imagery Strategies	15.74*
Exploring Past Experiences Exercise	18.08**
Discussion of Formal Career Assessments	5.88***
Discussion of Semi-Formal Career Assessments	10.03****
Discussion of Informal Career Assessments	17.33*****

* χ^2 (2, N=44), $p < .05$

** χ^2 (2, N=40), $p < .05$

*** χ^2 (1, N=43), $p < .05$

**** χ^2 (4, N=43), $p < .05$

***** χ^2 (6, N=43), $p < .05$

Table 9

Summary of Significant Chi-Square Analyses using Student Teacher's Declared Level of Participation and Usefulness on Week Course Content: Weekend #3

Topics	Value
Self-Portraits Exercise	46.41*
Discussion of Career Decision-Making Process	12.42**
Discussion of Decision-Making Strategies	5.42***
Discussion of Preparation (Action-Planning Strategies)	5.26**
Discussion of Implementation Strategies	7.83***

* χ^2 (6, N=46), $p < .05$

** χ^2 (2, N=45), $p < .05$

*** χ^2 (1, N=46), $p < .05$

in career planning; increased knowledge of valuable career development resources for students and teachers; increased confidence to integrate career education into curriculum; better knowledge of the processes involved in career self-management and a greater understanding of the importance of life-long career self-management; and an increased appreciation for the impact teachers can have on the career planning of students.

As a result of experiencing these important shifts in perceptions, knowledge, and confidence, the likelihood that pre-service teachers will engage in providing the kinds of career education activities students require to develop the competencies described earlier is greatly enhanced. That is, as a result of developing a heightened understanding of the instability of the 21st century world of work, the need to engage in life-long career self-management (and the need to develop the skills to do so) and the significant role that teachers can have in supporting students in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes to thrive throughout their lives/careers, pre-service teachers are more likely to intentionally integrate career interventions into curriculum and provide critical career learning opportunities. Further research needs to be conducted to determine whether this in fact the case. However, these preliminary findings are promising.

Although the intention

stability of the world of work, the need to engage in life-long career planning, the relative effectiveness of schools in providing career development support, etc.). However, by the end of the class all participants came to strongly endorse these items.

In addition to critical changes in perceptions, pre-service teachers who partici-

pated in the Career Education course also experienced changes in knowledge and confidence. Specifically, as a result of participating in the Career Education course, pre-service teachers reported that they developed: a much better understanding of career development theory and how it influences practice; a better understanding of how to engage students



Table 10

Summary of Significant Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests from Before Taking the Course to After Taking the Course

Question	Mean		Z
	Before	After	
A clear understanding of the theories of career development	1.41	4.04	-6.03
A clear understanding of how the theories of career development influence practice	1.41	4.26	-5.98
A clear understanding of how to get students involved in, and excited about, the importance of career planning	2.15	4.71	-5.97
Knowledge of resources available to students and teachers to assist students in their career planning	2.02	4.45	-5.98
Confidence in my ability to integrate career development concepts into the curriculum	1.67	4.63	-5.92
Knowledge of the processes involved in effective career self-management	1.84	4.71	-5.97
Understanding the importance of lifelong career self-management	2.73	4.84	-5.57
Understanding of the impact a teacher can have on the career development/career planning of student	2.97	4.86	-5.64

$p < .01$ (two tailed)

of this article is not to provide a template for how to offer a course in career education to pre-service teachers (or to provide detailed descriptions of what to include in such a course), the results of the research described in this article suggest some broad topics that seem to be particularly engaging and beneficial to pre-service teachers when training them in career education. These include: career counselling skills, general counselling processes, the world of work in the 21st century, initiation strategies (activities designed to engage students in self-reflection – especially related to exploring sources of personal meaning and visualiz-

ing a preferred future), career assessments (especially informal career assessments), career decision-making processes, career decision-making strategies, action/planning strategies and implementation strategies. These particular topics were most strongly endorsed by the pre-service teachers in our sample.

In summary, the *Career Coaching Across the Curriculum* pilot project was developed to improve the level of career support available to students in the K-12 educational system. Experts in the field of career development suggest that students require particular competencies to thrive in the

21st century world of work. Research suggests, however, that they are not accessing the level of support they require to acquire these competencies. The research described in this article suggests that, as a result of participating in the Career Education course (offered as part of the *Career Coaching Across the Curriculum* pilot project) pre-service teachers developed important perceptions, knowledge and skills about career planning in the 21st century. It is hoped that these changes in perception, knowledge and skill will result in these pre-service teachers infusing effective career planning support into curriculum when they participate in student teaching internships and when they pursue career opportunities in the educational system. In this way, the goal of providing effective, comprehensive support to students in the K-12 educational system will be advanced and students will receive the level of career support they both want and require. The researchers involved in this study are currently conducting follow up research to investigate whether providing this training to pre-service teachers in fact results in enhanced career planning in students and will report on this in subsequent publications.

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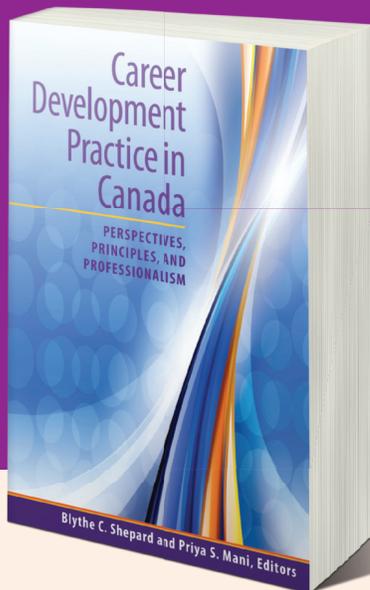
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Young Women Who Are Doing Well with Changes Affecting Their Work: Helping and Hindering Factors

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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

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		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Friends & Family	10	100	19	4	40	4		
Management and Work Environment	9	90	24	6	60	15	6	60
Skills Training & Self-growth	6	60	10	3	30	4	5	50
Personality Traits & Attitudes	6	60	6	1	10	1	1	10
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
Personal Change/ Stressful Event				3	30	6	1	10

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

<p>Friends & Family</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>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)</p>
<p>Management & Work Environment</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Wishlist incidents (60%) included participants who wished they had increased communication, team work, approachable managers, constructive feedback, and or more resources.</p>
<p>Skills Training and Self-growth.</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>Hindering incidents (30%). Examples included lack of opportunity to take courses or learn tasks that lead to new skills and self-growth.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Personality Traits and Attitudes</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>Hindering incidents (10%) included lack of confidence, over-determined and over-achieving.</p>
<p>Self-care</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>Hindering incidents (10%) included lack of self-care activities that decreased physical and emotional health.</p>
<p>Personal Boundaries and Self Awareness</p>	<p>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)</p>
<p>Take Action</p>	<p>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)</p>
<p>School Pressure/Workload</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>Wishlist incidents (40%) included participants who wanted more time, finances or material things to help with school pressure and workload.</p>
<p>Personal Change/Stressful Event</p>	<p>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).</p>



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." (Participant 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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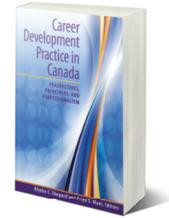
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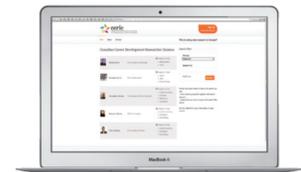
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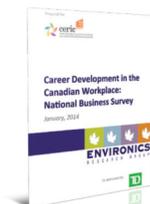
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Career Counselling with Community College Students: Applicability of a Narrative Approach

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Abstract

Due to changes in the economy and therefore in the workplace, increasing numbers of students are attending community colleges. The applicability of traditional career counselling models for today's students is questioned, and a narrative approach is proposed as uniquely situated to complement and enhance existing practices. Many narrative interventions, such as the writing of therapeutic documents and the identification of "guides," mimic the community college culture, with its homework assignments and program advisors. Use of metaphor is a helpful tool for work with many types of clients represented at community colleges such as young adults and those from other cultures, and the strengths-based nature of this approach can help reduce acculturative stress. Lastly, the holistic examination afforded by a narrative approach can help illuminate potential internal or external client factors that may impact career decision-making.

The face of work is evolving due to a number of factors that have been termed "the perfect storm" (Jarvis & Sandowski, 2010, p. 1) which is proposed to include the current economic downturn, an aging population, and the "up-skilling"

of jobs, requiring the job-seeker to upgrade or change careers at an unprecedented rate. Consequently, the meaning of "career" has dramatically changed in the past 20 years and increasing numbers of individuals are seeking the assistance of career counsellors with this transition (Luzzo, 2000). Savikas (2013) notes that the two meta-competencies needed by 21st century jobseekers are adaptability and identity. Since an estimated 80% of all jobs in Canada require some form of post-secondary training (Jarvis & Sandowski, 2010), and considering the prohibitive time and cost of many traditional four-year university programs, it is estimated that an increasing number of students will seek educational opportunities at a community college (Luzzo, 2000). Since people no longer stay in the same jobs for a lifetime, short, targeted programs of the type offered by community colleges may be increasingly selected over longer-term degree programs. This paper will examine the utility of a narrative approach in conjunction with traditional approaches to career counselling when working with college students.

Community College Students: Needs and Common Approaches

The demographics of a typical "student" at community colleges are also shifting - see Figure 1. The culture of a community college has been described as a "hybrid" of secondary school and traditional four-year postsecondary institutions, such as universities (Watt, Huerta, & Alkan, 2012). Community colleges are places of increasing diversity with respect to the age, gender, and ethnicity of their student population (Luzzo, 2000). A commonly used approach to career counselling in community colleges involves an attempt to "match" the characteristics of the individual to those of a job; this process tends to be based on Holland's (1970) research. This process may take varying forms but the traditional approach usually involves examining the "fit" between a person's abilities and/or interests and the tasks required by a given occupation. One example of such "matching" is the frequently used SDS (Self-Directed Search), a self-report instrument based on Holland's (1970) that matches individuals with career choices based on their interests, which are separated into six code types: Realistic, Conventional, Artistic, Social, Investigative, and Enterprising. It has been noted that this



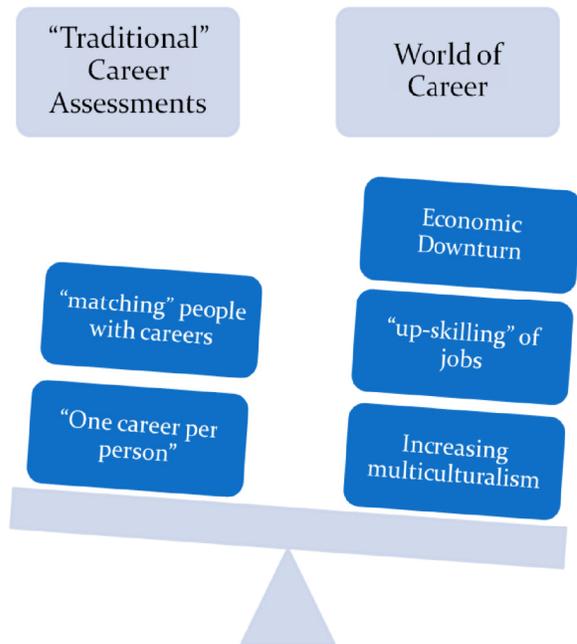
Figure 1

Community College: A Visual Summary



Figure 2

Need for a Paradigm Shift



‘matching’ model, while a useful first step, may not be adequate to help students navigate today’s career world (McMahon & Watson, 2012). I would contend that the pure “matching” approach does award enough importance to situ

ational or cultural factors that may impact career decision-making; additionally, it implies that there is one specific job for each person rather than viewing the career trajectory as fluid and responsive to the changing work-

place climate outlined above. Figure 2 visually outlines this discrepancy.

A student’s arrival at a community college is part of the larger story of their life, and the meaning they make of this step can have significant impact on their development, both vocationally and personally. For example, “displaced new traditionalists” (p. 133) is a term used by Locke and Gibbons (2008) to describe women who are reentering the workplace due to economic constraints as the result of divorce or death of their spouse. These individuals are increasingly registering at community colleges to upgrade existing skills or pursue a new career choice (Locke & Gibbons, 2008). I have worked with many of these women in my role as community college counsellor, and they represent an example of the diversity of the college population.

Because enrolling at community college implies a significant transition or shift in an individual’s life story (for example, in the case of the displaced new traditionalist, as described above), I would argue that narrative therapy is uniquely situated to assist the community college student with career planning. The philosophy and practice of narrative therapy will be described below, followed by an examination of narrative interventions and instruments with particular applicability for college students.

A Narrative Approach: Philosophical Underpinnings

The philosophical roots of narrative therapy, which was



developed by David Epston and Michael White in the early 1990's, lie in social constructionism. This approach places emphasis on subjectivity, context, and the agency of the individual. The narrative career counsellor, through encouraging the client to reflect on common themes and patterns in his or her career story, facilitates change through self-knowledge and strives to promote a more unified sense of self (Epston & White, 1990).

Narrative therapy pays particular attention to the social context in which the "problem" has arisen. This is believed to help the individual separate themselves from the problem and thereby achieve greater insight and agency in their lives (Epston & White, 1990). Applying this to career counselling, asking the student to reflect on the importance placed on "doing" rather than "being" in today's society (Hanson & Amundson, 2009) is an example of this attention to social discourse.

Other dominant social discourses that may have shaped a client's career decision-making processes include those of power and privilege, gender norms, and society's prizing of certain careers (doctor, lawyer) over others. Campbell and Ungar (2004) note that "the role of the counsellor is to facilitate a discussion of social discourse that influences a client's perceptions of his or her preferred future, not necessarily in an effort to change it, but to better understand it and the forces that constrain or support its achievement" (p. 30). Narrative therapy encourages the individual to examine "sparkling

moments" (Epston & White, 1990) which are described as exceptions to the often problem-saturated story they bring to the counselling session. For example, clients may be asked to describe a time when anxiety did not have such a strong hold on them. Use of language is an important area of focus in narrative therapy. Clients are encouraged to employ a "grammar of agency," the goal of which is to empower the client to recognize the capacity they have to change the course of their story. For example, a client could be asked how long they have been in this battle with anorexia – a question that places the client in an active stance against the problem (Roth & Epston, 1996).

Career and Identity: The College Student's Experience

College students are constantly confronted with career options; they are immersed in a culture of change and confronted with a smorgasbord of training options, from university transfer courses to hands-on training in specific trades. The array of options available reflects the changing economic environment.

When a college student comes for a career counselling session, their "story" might be that of difficulty deciding on a career. The most common hope that students express to me when seeking career counselling is that of "finding a career." Students often share experiences of great anxiety and confusion when confronted by significant others in their lives who constantly ask them "but what will you do?" Behind this expressed concern is

often hidden the assumption that finding the "right career" will help coalesce their identity – an important developmental task (Erikson, 1968) and enable them to successfully field these questions. Career counselling is seen as a panacea for this anxiously lurking question, and the student is often motivated by this anxiety to seek a "quick fix" to their "career problem." Narrative career counselling questions this tendency and offers a more holistic examination of career planning situated in the context of the individual's life story.

In narrative career counselling, there is less emphasis on traits and abilities and more on the client's understanding of themselves and the world. Clients' abilities and traits have been described by proponents of narrative career counselling as similar to Lego blocks, which can be assembled or reassembled in multiple ways (Campbell & Ungar, 2004). Inherent in this approach is the notion that a client's expressed career choice is "embedded inside a much larger and more diverse narrative" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004, p. 29). Although a client may cling to a specific occupation, such as a nurse, as "the only career choice," - a situation I have encountered frequently in my work - the role of the narrative career counsellor is to help the client see this choice in the context of their lives and to link it to personally relevant life themes. In the case of nursing, healing and helping others might be themes that merit further exploration in terms of their genesis and their place in the client's life story. This



process of discovering the roots of a client's preferred future is referred to as "decoding" by narrative career counsellors (Campbell & Ungar, 2004).

Because narrative career counselling involves an exploration of the client's career goals in the context of their lives, it can help bring to light situational or internal factors that may impact the client's vocational as well as personal life. This strength of the narrative approach is particularly relevant for working with college students: most college students experience myriad stressors, and research shows that this stress is increasing (Kadison & Di Geromino Foy, 2004). Compounding this is the fact that many psychiatric disorders are diagnosed in young adulthood and also that alcohol issues are greatest among ages 18-29 (Kadison & Di Geromino Foy, 2004) - college students between 18 and 24 in particular drink more than any other age group (Koyama & Belli, 2011). Financial strain, substance abuse, acculturation issues, and homesickness can all impact college students and may need to be addressed before career counselling can commence. Narrative therapy, with its focus on the story of the whole person, can bring out these issues and, through its focus on an individual's strengths and competencies, help encourage and support the individual personally as well as vocationally.

Considering the increasing multiculturalism of our society and the globalization of the workplace, it is not surprising that college students are becoming increasingly multicultural

(Yakunina et al., 2013; Harder, 2011). "Acculturative stress" describes the practical, cultural, and social challenges experienced by many international students when adjusting to a new culture (Yakunina et al., 2013). Acculturative stress is linked to many adverse physical and mental outcomes such as increased alcoholism, depression, and general stress. Interestingly, it has been found that focusing on the strengths – both personal and multicultural – of international students has found to be a protective factor against acculturative stress (Yakunina et al., 2013). Therefore, the strengths-based orientation of narrative therapy seems well-suited for this population.

Since at the core of narrative therapy is the belief that an individual's identity and view of the world are socially constructed, it follows that encouraging the client to observe and shift the way in which they interact with their environment would help to manifest internal change. One narrative technique that has great applicability for career counselling is the notion of 'scaffolding.' This is a process by which the client is encouraged to link their past story with their present or ideal future story (White, 2007). In the context of career counselling, scaffolding can be a useful image for the counsellor to refer to when encouraging the client to elaborate on their past experiences as they relate to present situations or future career goals (McMahon & Watson, 2012). Anderson-White and Gibbons (2011) use this approach when working with adults

in career transition following a natural disaster. They encourage these individuals to "include their new reality, post-disaster, in their stories because [...] life themes would have been altered as a result of the experience" (Anderson-White & Gibbons, 2011, p. 192). Imagery and metaphor also figure prominently in narrative therapy, and are discussed below as they relate to career counselling.

Imagery and Metaphor

B.F. Skinner (1989), describing the difference between doing and sensing in his seminal paper *The Origins of Cognitive Thought*, states "the bodily condition associated with a high probability that we shall do something is hard [...] to pin down, and we resort to metaphor. Because things often fall in the direction they lean, we say we are inclined to do something [...] if we are strongly inclined, we may even say we are bent on doing it" (p. 13).

Human capacity for metaphor is thought to have evolved as an adaptive mechanism as it represents the ability to make links between seemingly unrelated constructs, which appears in part, to describe the construct of creativity. Ramahandran and Hubbard (2005) note that synesthesia, a condition characterized by a blending of two or more senses (for example, perceiving the note C sharp as bright green), is more common in painters, poets, and novelists. They conclude that the synesthesia gene, which likely results in excessive communication among



different brain areas, has probably survived due to its link to creativity – clearly an adaptive trait – and suggest that metaphor may represent a type of linguistic synesthesia (Ramahandran & Hubbard, 2005). Young children instinctively use metaphor as part of the animism and magical thinking that characterize early childhood (Piaget, 1929). Career theorists have lamented the fact that this flexibility with language tends to lessen in adulthood (Amundson, in press). Since many college students are in transition between childhood and adulthood, evoking the metaphoric language of childhood can be helpful in maintaining this cognitive flexibility as it may stimulate creativity, a helpful trait in the career planning process.

Metaphor is used in narrative therapy as a way of externalizing the problem, which has the effect of creating space between it and the client. In this space, change can occur (Epston & White, 1990). In fact, McGuinty et al., (2011) point out that the word “metaphor” comes from the Greek “metaphorin” meaning to transfer. Thus, when a child begins to view her anxiety as a monster, the anxiety has been effectively “transferred” from an internal place to an external one (McGuinty et al., 2011). Use of metaphor in therapy has shown success with prison inmates (Romig & Gruenke, 2001), adolescents (Martin, 2003), and those with autism-spectrum disorders (McGuinty, Armstrong, Nelson & Sheeler, 2011). These clients may display experience difficulty with or resistance to

wards describing their “problem;” therefore, the use of metaphor, because of its distancing effect, would likely be effective with these populations. In career counselling, - particularly with college students who may only have a nascent idea of the meaning of “career” - as it relates to identity, use of metaphor, in addition to the distancing function described above, can help bring clarity by virtue of pulling various conceptual elements together into a simple, coherent image (Amundsen, in press). Shifting metaphors can also shift therapeutic progress. For example, in career counselling, transforming the commonly used image of a “career path” to one of a “voyage” - which takes into account fellow sailors and shifting tides – can shift the meaning of the career exploration process (Anderson, 2013).

One expressed concern about the use of metaphor is a projected difficulty applying it to those from other cultures (Amundson, in press). However, Amundson also points out that many metaphors are universal in nature. Also, while the narrative therapist may generate metaphors, it is considered a more powerful and personally relevant intervention if the client is able to generate his or her own metaphor (Amundson, 2014).

In my experience, expanding on the client’s own expressed metaphor results in an enriching experience for both counsellor and client and may provide an opportunity for cross-cultural learning. For example, one client of Iranian heritage described her current depression to

me as “keeping me from watering the garden of my mind” (personal communication, October 15, 2011). This spontaneously generated metaphor resulted in rich subsequent dialogue about the fruits of her garden and what might be needed to sustain them; it also provided ample evidence of the skills and competencies she brought to her career search. Metaphor can also be helpful in breaking down barriers to communication in the case of non-native English speakers. Metaphor can be more fluid than literal language since the image it conjures is often immediately understood by the listener even without cultural familiarity with a given metaphor.

In career counselling, one of the most commonly invoked metaphors is that of construction or of co-construction (McMahon & Watson, 2012). This metaphor brings to mind the mutual putting together of objects with the goal of creating a structure or object of some kind; career counsellors typically refer to the “construction” of a career identity. However, Poehnell and Amundson (2002) suggest that “crafting” is a more appropriate term as it encapsulates the more finely detailed and creative process involved in narrative career counselling. I concur with these authors that “crafting” is a more nuanced term; more importantly, however, I would contend that this shift from “crafting” to “construction” is an example of the power of metaphor to change how events are viewed.



Therapeutic Documents

One way for the client to build a bridge (to use a narrative metaphor) between their old and their new story is by writing or receiving a therapeutic document. The writing of therapeutic letters in narrative therapy could be viewed as a concrete manifestation of the notion of “re-authoring” problematic narratives. David Epston (1990) was noted for writing a letter to his client after every session. These letters became the client’s “clinical file,” which, rather than being hidden in a drawer out of sight of the client, was shared between client and therapist (Epston & White, 1990).

Letter writing has many potential positive outcomes which are relevant to career counselling with younger or resistant clients – for example, clients who have been “mandated” to see a career counsellor by their parents, a situation frequently encountered by myself. Since many community college students have recently navigated adolescence and may be in transition from the role of child to adult (for example, living alone for the first time), they may present with resistance and other behaviours often seen in adolescent clients.

Kress, Hinkle, and Protivnak (2011) found that letter-writing was a particularly useful intervention in school counselling. They note that their adolescent clients tended to forget conversations they had during counselling sessions and subsequently question the effectiveness of a solely verbal exchange.

They also point out that writing letters may be less threatening to adolescent clients than direct conversation. In addition, writing letters can help promote a sense of autonomy and control, an important developmental need (Martin, 2003) since they alone are the author of the document. Several examples of therapeutic letters are noted by Kress et al. (2011) in their work with students. These include “letters from the future,” in which the student imagines that he or she has already successfully navigated the current problem, “letter to a friend,” in which the student, as the “expert” on the current problem, writes to a friend with advice and suggestions on how to tackle this problem, and the “rainy day letter” in which the student composes a letter from the perspective of the future in which they are having a “good day” and provides encouragement with respect to their present struggles (Kress et al., 2011). A narrative technique that is often integrated into letter-writing and has particular applicability for career counselling is the idea of guides or mentors. Guides are defined as figures (real or fictional) which possess some aspect (attribute, skill) to which the client aspires. Epton and White (1990) note that the idea of the guide is taken from the archetype of the “wise person” frequently seen in common folklore. Guides have often experienced hardships on their journey with which the client may identify. Alternatively, a guide can be a person who helped the client at a point where he or she was in greatest need. For exam-

ple, a nursing student described to me an experience of being seriously ill and cared for by an exceptional nurse as precipitating her decision to enter the field of nursing. In my experience, guides can range from a pop musician to a historical figure or someone’s aunt. The client can be asked to write a letter from this guide containing advice or encouragement related to career planning. The client can also simply be asked what a guide might say if presented with the current “problem” the client is facing.

Narrative Instruments

It has been difficult to translate the philosophical tenets of post-modernism and social constructionism into concrete career planning activities, as noted by Campbell and Ungar (2004). It has been even more challenging to develop instruments that measure “narrative change,” the desired outcome of most narrative approaches. One instrument that has been used to measure narrative change in the context of career exploration is the Future Career Autobiography (FCA; Rehfuss, 2009). It consists of an open-ended prompt: “Please use this page to write a brief paragraph about where you hope to be in life and what you hope to be doing occupationally five years from now.” The sheet is titled “Future Career Autobiography” (Rehfuss, 2009). Recently, this measure’s validity was tested in a study of 82 Italian female entrepreneurs (Rehfuss & Di Fabio, 2012). Several differences were found in participants’ narratives



in the group that had received the narrative intervention versus the group that had received no intervention. Of note was the finding that 95% of participants in the experimental group showed evidence of themes representing change in their narratives, whereas only 11.9% of those who had received no intervention presented with change themes. Themes that emerged for the experimental group were movement from generality to specification, disregard to direction, vagueness to focus, and hindered to hopeful (Rehfuss & Di Fabio, 2009). The results of this study seem to indicate that the FCA is a narrative tool that can help stimulate forward movement in career decision-making.

Campbell and Ungar (2004) propose a model of seven aspects of life/work design that may be explored with the client at various temporal points in therapy, depending on the client's current needs. This approach involves first an exploration of career goals followed by an examination of internal and external resources; finally, stories of constraint are contrasted with preferred stories and room is provided for change to occur as the client's story evolves.

Another instrument combines the traditional Holland codes with narrative questions: the ISI (Integrated Structured Interview; McMahon & Watson, 2010). This instrument is composed of narrative questions which follow from the traditional data (Holland codes) obtained from the SDS (Self-Directed Search). For example, a question asked in this instrument is "In

what ways is the first letter of your code evident in your life?" (McMahon & Watson, 2012, p. 444). The authors of this instrument note that the ISI is unique in its combination of qualitative narrative intervention and quantitative assessment. This instrument shows great promise not only for individual career counselling with community college students, but also as part of a group counselling exercise – many community colleges now offer career exploration workshops designed to reach a larger number of students in an efficient manner.

Criticisms and Directions for Future Exploration

One of the most frequently cited concerns about the narrative approach is its length. The word "narrative" itself conjures images of lengthy storytelling and, as colleagues have frequently cautioned me, implies a disregard for the trend towards managed care and brief, solution-focused therapy of the kind currently espoused by many community colleges due to increased usage of services and time constraints. However, McMahon and Watson's (2012) ISI assessment can be completed in one session, assuming the SDS has already been completed. Furthermore, many of the assessment tools can be implemented in group settings, thus increasing their cost-effectiveness. As trends move towards managed care and shorter duration of counselling sessions, it is expected that more such interventions will be developed.

Another criticism of the narrative approach is one leveled at post-modern approaches in general: the difficulty in translating a philosophical orientation into practical interventions (Campbell & Ungar, 2004). While this problem is acknowledged by many narrative career therapists, a number of options – in the form of narrative career interventions and assessment instruments – have been and continue to be created, including those cited in this article (e.g. McMahon & Watson, 2012; Rehfuss & di Fabio, 2009).

Lastly, there are concerns that narrative therapy, lacking a strong empirical base such as the one that exists for CBT, is ineffective or 'unscientific' (Epston, Stillman & Erbes, 2012). One obvious response to this criticism is that it is difficult to empirically validate an approach without significant funding or interest from the research community. However, studies are increasingly being conducted that demonstrate the effectiveness of narrative therapy for a wide range of concerns: from eating disorders (Brouwers, 1994) to substance abuse (Morgan, Brosi & Brosi, 2011) and PTSD (McPherson, 2011), to the narrative career counselling interventions described in this paper.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the unique needs of the growing and diverse population of community college students. I have examined the philosophy, interventions, and instruments used by career counsellors working from a narrative perspective and



discussed their applicability for use with college students. Numerous aspects of narrative therapy seem uniquely suited to counselling this population. Namely, the “scaffolding” approach of linking past stories with projected future ones is very applicable to this population in transition; use of metaphor is a helpful tool for work with many types of clients represented at community colleges such as young adults, resistant clients, and those from other cultures, and the strengths-based nature of this approach can help reduce acculturative stress. Furthermore, many narrative interventions, such as the writing of therapeutic documents and the identification of “guides,” mimic the community college culture with its homework assignments and “program advisors.” Narrative therapy’s focus on employing a grammar of agency and fostering a sense of self-efficacy on the part of the client seems particularly relevant considering the rapid changes in the workplace described in the introduction to this paper; for example, the electronic era into which the world of career is moving. Bandura (2002) notes that the advent of internet technology has changed the competencies required of individuals in the workplace. He suggests that educational institutions must shift their emphasis from imparting knowledge to teaching students how to seek it – in effect, to develop their sense of agency. Lastly, the holistic examination afforded by narrative therapy can help illuminate potential internal or external client factors that may impact career decision-making.

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What Helps and Hinders the Hopefulness of Post-Secondary Students Who Have Experienced Significant Barriers

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Abstract

This study investigated how undergraduate students in Canada and the United States experience high levels of hope in the face of challenges, specifically, what helps and hinders their hopefulness. Enhanced Critical Incident Technique was used, consisting of in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowing for open-ended, clarifying questions. Fifteen students self-reporting high levels of both hope and barriers were interviewed to ascertain their definitions of hope and the factors that helped and hindered hopefulness. Participants defined hope as a multidimensional concept involving affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, contextual and temporal factors. 281 incidents revealed internal and environmental factors that influenced hope. Internal factors included future goals, attitude, passion, self-efficacy, social and professional contribution, refocusing activities, negative emotions and cognitions, and health. Environmental factors included support, role models, possibilities and opportunities, school, negative/un-supportive people, situations outside one's control, and eco-

nomic/financial challenges. Spirituality emerged as an internal and environmental factor. Relationships emerged as having the most significant positive and negative impact on hope. Findings suggest that hope and the factors influencing it can play an integral role in students' personal and career development, and that there is need for career counsellors in post-secondary Career Services departments.

Résumé de recherche

Cette étude avait pour but d'examiner les conditions dans lesquelles, les étudiants de premier cycle au Canada et aux États-Unis, face aux épreuves à surmonter, ressentent un fort espoir, en particulier lorsqu'ils sont confrontés à ces défis, et c'est spécifiquement ce qui favorise ou entrave, leur espérance. Nous avons employé une méthode améliorée des incidents critiques, comprenant des entrevues tour à tour en profondeur et semi-structurées, donnant lieu à des questions ouvertes et également à des questions de clarification. Pour ce faire, nous avons interrogé un panel de quinze étudiants déclarant à la fois éprouver de

vifs espoirs et être confrontés à de nombreux obstacles, afin de connaître leurs définitions respectives de l'espoir et également de déceler les facteurs qui ont favorisé ou freiné leur espérance.

Les participants ont défini l'espoir comme un concept multidimensionnel dans lequel entrent en jeu des facteurs affectifs, cognitifs, comportementaux, affiliatifs, contextuels et temporels. 281 cas ont été étudiés et ces derniers ont révélé que des facteurs internes et environnementaux avaient influencé le niveau d'espérance. Les facteurs internes prenaient en compte les projets futurs, l'attitude, la passion, l'auto-efficacité, la contribution sociale et professionnelle, le recentrage des activités, les émotions négatives, le niveau de connaissance ainsi que l'état de santé. Les facteurs environnementaux se définissent par les divers soutiens, les modèles à suivre, les possibilités et opportunités, l'école, les personnes négatives / peu coopératives, les situations échappant au contrôle de la personne et les défis économiques/financiers. La spiritualité s'est révélée être un facteur à la fois interne et



environnemental. Il s'est avéré que les relations avaient l'impact positif ou négatif le plus significatif sur le niveau d'espérance. Les résultats suggèrent que l'espoir et les facteurs qui l'influencent peuvent jouer un rôle essentiel dans le développement personnel et professionnel des étudiants et qu'il existe une demande en conseillers d'orientation dans les départements de services d'emploi et d'orientation en études postsecondaires.

Hope plays an integral role in one's life and career (Niles, Amundson & Neault, 2011) as well as in the counselling process (Edey & Jevne, 2003). Among the many factors that should be considered when working with post-secondary students, it is essential to recognize hope and the central role it may play in career development processes. Highly hopeful individuals seem to achieve higher performance in their careers, and in general are more likely to be satisfied with their life and career (Niles, In, Chen, Su, deShield, & Yoon, 2013). It is inevitable that individuals will face challenges and barriers during the course of their lives and careers that can affect feelings of hopefulness. However, research suggests "the course of hope and hopelessness is dynamic and changing in response to maturation and adaptation to life events" (Stoddard, Henly, Sieving & Bolland, 2011, p. 279). The purpose of this study was to understand how a group of post-secondary students in Canada and the United States experience high levels of hope in the face of sig-

nificant barriers, specifically what helps and hinders their experiences of hope in their lives and careers.

Definitions

There are varying definitions of hope within the literature and across disciplines. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) conceptualize hope as "a multidimensional dynamic life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good which is realistically possible and personally significant" (p. 380). They identify two spheres of hope, generalized and particularized, which function together and reciprocally. Particularized hope involves a specific goal and includes affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, contextual and temporal factors. Generalized hope involves the expectation that the future will be positive without focusing on a particular outcome; they describe it as "an intangible umbrella that protects hoping persons by casting a positive glow on life" (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985, p. 380). Similarly, Stephenson (1991) defines hope as "a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling, and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful" (p. 1459). Meanwhile, Snyder (2002) defines hope as an interconnected cognitive construct with three components: "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (p. 249). The first component,

goals, is having the ability to imagine meaningful career goals. Pathways thinking involves having specific strategies for achieving these goals. Finally, agency thinking requires believing that one can achieve one's goals. For example, if the individual has goals and strategies but is unable to use agency thinking then she or he will likely find it difficult to persevere during difficult times or when faced with obstacles (Niles et al., 2011; Niles, 2011).

In addition, some authors distinguish hope from optimism. Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy, and Fortunato (2007) defined hope as a general expectation of positive outcomes where the individual does not necessarily initiate events nor does she or he take specific action to facilitate the events. Scheier and Carver (1985) suggest that optimism is a generalized expected positive outcome regarding goal achievement over the life span which allows people to remain engaged in the pursuit of their goals despite barriers. Bryant and Cvengros (2004) explored hope and optimism both as a unitary construct and as two distinct constructs, concluding that their data indicated that both conceptualizations have merit. In support of two separate constructs, they concluded "hope and optimism factors have greater explanatory power than does a single global 'super' factor, and the two constructs show divergent patterns of association with coping and self-efficacy" (p. 296). However, they also found support for a unitary conceptualization, "hope and optimism share a sizeable portion (64%) of their variance, and a



single global 'super' factor provides a reasonable and parsimonious goodness-of-fit to the data" (p. 296).

Career and Hope

Research has suggested important connections between work and hope. Employees with higher levels of hope are more likely to demonstrate better job performance (Combs, Clapp-Smith, & Nadkarni, 2010; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Peterson & Byron, 2008), report higher job satisfaction (Tombaugh, Mayfield, & Wooten, 2011; Youssef & Luthans, 2007) and have less absenteeism (Avey, Patera, & West, 2006). Furthermore, higher levels of hope have been associated with increased creativity at work (Rego, Machado, Leal, & Cunha, 2009; Sweetman, Luthans, Avey, & Luthans, 2011), which is notable given that the Conference Board of Canada (2013) identifies creativity and innovation as essential to enhance organizational performance.

Isenor (2011) found that hope may serve as a protective factor against experiencing depressive or grief reactions after involuntary job loss. Ribton-Turner and Bruin (2006) found that unemployed individuals may have differed in the role and importance of spirituality in their lives, but almost all of them drew upon it as a source of support to help them cope daily and sustain hope.

Hope and Barriers

Post-secondary students may encounter a range of barriers in their lives and careers. Diemer and Blustein (2007) suggest that even with the challenges and barriers many students face, they are able to remain focused and connected to their future aspirations due to their level of hope. Hope may be correlated with resilience, which can involve "the use of setbacks as 'springboards' or opportunities for growth" (Youssef & Luthans, 2007, p. 780) in the face of adversity. Furthermore, hope may enable an individual to act on chance opportunities and test possibilities when they present themselves. Indeed, having a sense of hope may allow individuals to consider the possibilities in any emerging or established situation and propel them to take action (Snyder, 2002; Niles et al., 2011).

Hope is considered to be one of the factors that positively influences and enables individuals to cope during times of uncertainty, loss and suffering (Herth, 1993), and to change their lives and come closer to creating the life they desire to live (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). People with high levels of hope with a corresponding high level of agency and a high sense of pathways are more likely to be psychologically resilient and generate a range of options to overcome obstacles (Shorey, Snyder, Yang, & Lewin, 2003; Elliott, Witty, Herrick, & Hoffman, 1991). Conversely, the loss of hope, and the lessening of life goals and expectations is thought to reduce quality of life (Haase, Britt, Coward, Leidy, &

Penn, 1992; Herth, 1993).

Studies have found that hope had an inverse effect on depression (Arnau et al., 2007; Elliott et al., 1991; Shorey et al., 2003) and anxiety (Arnau et al., 2007; Shorey et al., 2003). However, depression and anxiety did not have any long-term impact on levels of hopefulness. The findings suggest hope may be related to resiliency or may be a protective factor. Hope also predicted the development of depression and psychosocial impairment in individuals who acquired physical disabilities (Elliott et al., 1991). Furthermore, students with learning disabilities reported lower academic self-efficacy, lower levels of hope, and they rated their moods more negatively (Lackaye, Margalit, Ziv & Ziman, 2006). Abuse and neglect can also contribute to lower mood, negative cognitions, and feelings of hopelessness. Childhood emotional abuse and neglect have been associated with high levels of hopelessness and depression (Gibb et al., 2001; Teicher et al., 2006), with hopelessness significantly mediating the link between emotional abuse and symptoms of depression (Courtney, Kushwaha, & Johnson, 2008). Rose and Abramson (1992) suggested that children who are emotionally abused are more likely to internalize the abuse, which fosters feelings of hopelessness. Findings from a longitudinal study suggest that emotionally abused children are more likely to experience low levels of hope and increased depressive symptoms over time (Courtney et al., 2008). A study done by Kazdin, Moser, Colbus,



and Bell (1985) looked at depression in physically abused and non-abused psychiatric inpatients ages 6 to 13. The findings revealed greater depression and more hopelessness in the abused relative to the non-abused children.

Finding housing can be a significant challenge for post-secondary students. There is little known about youth housing instability and hope. Additionally, there is conflicting evidence about youth homelessness and hope, which may be complicated by intersecting factors such as physical and mental health, the ability to generate income, and/or educational attainment. Amongst homeless youth in Canada, Hughes et al. (2010) found that poorer self-ratings of physical or mental health were related to less hopefulness; whereas, Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, and Patterson (2010) found some homeless youth adopted an optimistic attitude towards negative attitudes of others regarding street level work, with one participant stating “something will come through and you’ll just be happy.” (p. 50).

Interpersonal barriers also impact feelings of hope, especially in the case of parental relationships. Stoddard, Henly, Sieving, and Bolland (2010) found that youth who reported stronger connections with their mother were less hopeless at age 13. In Snyder’s (1994) hope theory, parents “coaching” behaviours affect the development of hope. Further, authoritative parenting has been shown to have a small effect on hope with attachment being predictive of hopeful-

ness (Shorey et al., 2003).

Methodology

In this study, we used Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT; Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009) to explore what helps and hinders students who have high levels of hope while also facing high barriers. ECIT is based on the critical incident technique (CIT), a qualitative approach developed by Flanagan (1984). The ECIT approach builds on CIT by adding credibility and trustworthiness checks, which reinforce the results attained using CIT (Butterfield et al., 2009). ECIT enables researchers to investigate “effective and ineffective ways of doing something, looking at helping and hindering factors, collecting functional or behavioural descriptions of events or problems, examining success and failure, and determining characteristics that are critical to important aspects of an activity or event” (Butterfield et al., 2005, p.476). ECIT consists of in-depth, semi-structured interviews that allow for open-ended, clarifying questions. Incidents include antecedent information, detailed description of experiences, and descriptions of the outcomes.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from the quantitative phase of Amundson, Niles, Yoon, Smith, In, & Mills’ (2013) study, which used the Hope-Centred Career Inventory (HCCI) to

assess the hope-centred career development of Canadian and American post-secondary students. The HCCI (Niles, Joon, Balin & Amundson, 2010) is based on the Hope-Centred Model of Career Development (Niles, Amundson & Neault, 2011), which uses hope as a principal construct, integrating and synthesizing human agency theory (Bandura, 2001), career metacompetencies (Hall, 1996), and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). The HCCI consists of 28 self-reported items designed to assess the degree of hope and hope-related career development competencies. Higher scores indicate a greater degree of hope-centred career competencies. All of the participants selected for the current study had a score of 4.0 on the HCCI, which is the highest score possible. Participants’ self-reported barriers using the Perceived Barriers Scale (McWhirter, 1992), with scores ranging from 2.81-3.71 on a five-point Likert scale.

Our focus for this study was on people who self-reported the highest level of barriers along with the highest level of hope, and who were fluent in English. Nineteen of the 676 Canadian respondents (2.8%) and 27 of the 1009 U.S. respondents (2.6%) met the inclusion criteria. Fifteen participants were interviewed in total. Seven of the 19 people eligible to participate from the Canadian universities were interviewed, representing 36.8% of the possible Canadian participants. Eight of the 27 people in the U.S. were interviewed, representing 29.6% of the possible U.S. sample. It should be noted



that these numbers represent a very high response rate relative to the size of the sample.

Amongst the fifteen participants, five were from The University of British Columbia, two from Thompson Rivers University in Canada, one from Pennsylvania College of Technology, and seven from Pennsylvania State University in the United States. All were undergraduates in the first or second year of their current program at the time of the quantitative data collection.

Some had more years of post-secondary study but had changed majors and were classified as first or second year students. Participants represented a diverse range of majors including music, social work, engineering, science, business, arts, geography and golf course management, with students considering entering professional programs such as medicine, veterinary sciences, and architecture. Their ages ranged from 18-25 years of age with the average age and modal age being 20. In terms of their grades, five participants reported having mostly A's, nine reported mostly B's, one reported mostly C's. There were 13 females and 2 males in the sample. During the interviews, participants self-reported the following additional demographic information:

- 7 Canadian Citizens, 6 U. S. Citizens, 1 dual U. S. & another country, and 1 international student who had studied in Canada and the U. S.
- 8 Caucasian, 3 Asian, 2 African American, 1 Asian & Caucasian, 1

Middle Eastern

- 14 spoke English as a first language; 1 spoke Mandarin as first language but spoke English fluently
- 1 was married, 14 single
- 2 people had completed careers: 1 military and 1 professional athlete
- 1 person identified as being a member of the LGBT community
- 1 person had step-children

Data Collection

All participants completed an informed consent process approved by the Ethics Boards of the respective educational institutions. The primary interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in duration, depending on the responses of the participants. Participants were asked to discuss what helps and hinders their feelings of hopefulness in the face of barriers. As a way to provide context, participants were also asked to describe their definition of hope. Participants discussed hope in relationship to their lives and their career aspirations and data were analyzed together.

Fifteen interviews were completed with five conducted by telephone and ten conducted in-person. All interviews were audio recorded and handwritten notes were taken. After the preliminary analysis was complete, a second interview was conducted by email in order to provide participants with an opportunity to add, change, clarify or correct their responses.

Data Validation

ECIT involves a number of validation checks (Butterfield et al., 2009). All interviews were audiotaped and analysis was conducted from transcripts to attend to descriptive validity. Interview fidelity was ensured by having an ECIT expert review a select number of transcripts to confirm that the methodology and interview protocol were followed. Interviews continued until no new items occurred to ensure exhaustion. Because no qualified American interviewer was available to conduct the interviews of Penn State and Penn College students, the U.S. based transcripts were analyzed by a member of the research team who is a U.S. citizen to ensure that an appropriate cultural lens was applied during analysis. A second interview by email was conducted with participants to confirm accuracy of the analysis and allow for additions, deletions or changes in order to attend to descriptive validity. Two researchers with career counselling and ECIT expertise reviewed the data until 100% agreement was achieved on all categories and incidents. Two experts with extensive experience in career counselling and research reviewed the categories to determine utility, surprise, and identify any missing items.

Findings

The 15 participants provided definitions for hope, and samples of their definitions are described below. In addition to their definitions, they described 281 incidents consisting of 194



helping incidents (69.0%) and 87 hindering incidents (31.0%) that influenced their experiences of hope. The incidents were organized into the following helping and hindering factors categories listed and described below. Some of the described incidents related to more than one factor.

Participants' Definitions of Hope

Consistent throughout participants' definitions was the idea that hope was future oriented. One hundred percent of the participants included both the future and optimism in their definitions in some way, with 13 participants relating their definition to some kind of positive outcome or orientation. Ten of the participants related goals to their definition, either explicitly or implicitly. Furthermore, seven participants indicated agency thinking in their definition, with one of the seven also incorporating pathways thinking. Eight participants described their definition in terms of faith and 13 participants related their definition to some kind of positive outcome. One example of a participant's definition of hope follows:

I think hope [is] the drive in me...I always have a lot of confidence or ... I just have the feeling like something good can come out of every situation. I will be able to just find where I need to go. Every bad obstacle that I have encountered in my life somehow...I've just pushed through it and then turned it

around into something that can actually benefit me or ... help me be a better person or just somehow ... get past it. I think that hope is like that drive for me, it drives me to look at the situation and be like, 'no, you're not just gonna sit here and cry over it even though that's all you really wanna do'. [It] gets me up and ... gets me going.

Another participant defined hope in the following manner:

What hope means to me is no matter how horrible the time I'm having, no matter how nothing seems like it's going right, I know that everything is happening for a reason and that somehow I have a hope, I just have this feeling that everything will work out in the end and everything will be as it should.

Barriers

During the interviews, participants identified a range of barriers including: physical and mental health; undiagnosed learning disabilities; sexual, physical, emotional and economic abuse; sexual harassment; financial and housing challenges; parents' divorces; neglect; death of loved ones; intergenerational conflict; body image concerns; and their own expectations and the expectations of others. It should be noted that the total scores on the Perceived Barrier Scale may underrepresent the level of barriers experienced by participants given the severity of some of the barriers they reported during the interviews.

Helping Categories

Participants reported a total of 194 helping incidents that positively influenced their experiences of hope. These incidents were analyzed and separated into 14 categories, all of which are reported. It should be noted that in some examples, the incidents described involved two or more categories.

Support. Support from others was the largest category with all 15 (100%) participants reporting that they received support from one or more of family, partners, friends, organizations such as the university, and pets. These sources provided encouragement, financial, and emotional support. Participants also used social media and networking to receive support. One participant stated "[mom's] just been that strong person for me. And I can call her ... any time. She is really just that voice of reasoning and hope for me."

Another participant spoke about the support she received from a friend. This person said of her friend,

she is on track to [do] the same thing. We text ... every day...She always ... encourages me... She always says, 'we have to graduate together ... I'm never gonna let you fall', et cetera, ... so her words are very encouraging and definitely gives me hope.

Future goals. Eleven (73.3%) of participants had future oriented goals including obtaining a degree, or going to



Table 1

Categories of Helping Factors

<u>Helping Factors</u>	<u># of participants</u>	<u>% of participants</u>	<u># of incidents</u>	<u>% of incidents</u>
1. Support	15	100.0	47	24.2
2. Future Goals	11	73.3	20	10.3
3. Role Models	10	66.7	31	16.0
4. Attitude	8	53.3	25	12.9
5. Passion	7	46.7	12	6.2
6. Possibilities and Opportunities	6	40.0	18	9.3
7. Self-efficacy	6	40.0	8	4.1
8. Social/Professional Contribution	5	33.3	10	5.2
9. School	5	33.3	9	4.6
10. Spirituality	4	26.7	5	2.6
11. Refocusing Activities	4	26.7	5	2.6
12. Recognition and Achievement	3	20.0	9	4.6
13. Supporting Significant Others	3	20.0	3	1.5
14. Family Expectations	2	13.3	2	1.0

graduate school.. They also had goals of starting careers as a veterinarian, a pediatrician, an English teacher or taking over the family farm. They also had visions of starting a family, and being independent. They had smaller goals such as being published in a journal. One participant said, “knowing I’m going to school and there will be a change, and I can see my life hitting a major goal, that’s what is inspiring and hopeful to me.”

Role models. Ten (66.7%) participants reported that people in their lives have inspired them and positively influenced their experiences of hope. These role models included: family, friends, professionals, or public figures.. One participant discussed the influence a counsellor had:

Seeing how positively [working with her] affected my own thoughts and person in life, it really made me want to have that influence on someone else. I really wanted to ... be able to say, ‘hey, I helped that one person and I changed their life in some way ...

Attitude. A total of 8 (53.3%) participants described having beliefs or perspectives involving perseverance and gratitude, an ability to successfully overcome obstacles, and a trust that things will work out as they should. They reported sometimes using self-talk to strengthen their attitude. One participant described the attitude as “it could be worse”, while another said “well there’s nothing else you can do, right? You just have to keep going.”

Passion. Seven (46.7%) participants reported having an intense enthusiasm for an academic discipline, a future career, or an activity like caring for children or animals that is personally meaningful. One participant, who had a current career goal of teaching English overseas, said

I really love learning, so ... right now ... I’m learning old English and learning ... different texts from ... the 18th century and all these things about ... linguistics ... I never knew there was so much that came with language and the technicalities ... it’s amazing.

Possibilities and opportunities. There were 6 (40%) participants who described feeling hopeful about possibilities and opportunities. Some described opportunities that already



exist, such as Co-operative Education. Possibilities were described as things that could happen in their lives if they tried. For example one participant was hopeful about the possibility of travelling independently in Europe while another talked about the possibility of starting a business. One participant described the opportunity to take a university course while still in high school,

I had hope that I had the grades to do it. I believed in myself that I could ... if I applied. I might as well apply because if you don't apply, you'll never know. And having hope that it will turn out in the end.

Self-Efficacy. A total of 6 (40%) participants reported having an awareness and knowledge that enabled coping, in addition to developing skills that enabled them to act and accomplish goals. One participant reported learning techniques to increase assertiveness and express her feelings and opinions, while another talked about being able to live independently and care for herself. One participant described

[the counsellor] really helped me build up my confidence and taught me that I could tell people what they're doing is not right and if I didn't like it, I had a voice and I could ... voice my opinion.

Social and professional contribution. Five (33.3%) participants discussed either making or wanting to make small and large social or professional contributions in the present or in the

future. Examples of these contributions included seeing a need and wanting to fill it by pursuing a future career in healthcare, and presently using their skills and knowledge to help others by tutoring students or volunteering. One participant described how helping others by volunteering kind of keeps me going and just reminds me every day that I'm working with the girls, that ... this is what I want to be doing, and these are the type of people I want to be working with for the rest of my life.

School. A total of 5 (33.3%) participants' reported experiences in high school or university that helped them feel hopeful. Participants described experiences that provided them with a sense of belonging, a positive environment, a structured process leading to an outcome such as a degree, and the ability to participate in research and completing projects that are meaningful to them. One participant talked about school in the following way: "the formality of having school there, the structure, that's just another thing that keeps me hopeful... I know that there's an outcome at the end of it."

Spirituality. Four (26.7%) participants described experiences involving organized religion that facilitated and maintained feelings of hopefulness. A participant discussed her, "faith in God ... and knowing that He's there with me every time ... I struggle or every time there's something good.

So in good times and bad times ... knowing He's there ... assures me that my future is going to be full of hope."

Refocusing activities.

There were 4 (26.7%) participants who reported being able to refocus on themselves and the things that are important to them through activities such as sketching, exercise, or being in nature positively influenced their experiences of hope. These activities enabled them to distract themselves from difficult circumstances and provided opportunities to achieve clarity on direction and goals. One participant said, I'm really into photography right now as well.... In a sense it detaches you, your brain is focusing so much on what you're doing, on that creative drive, that it takes away from anything [negative] that ... is going on... I've found it to be like a great escape, ... a great therapy.

Recognition and achievement. A total of 3 (20.0%) participants discussed how their skills, talents and efforts were recognized by meaningful people or organizations, which helped them to feel hopeful. Examples include receiving an award, earning good grades, being noticed by teachers and appearing on television.

Supporting significant others. Three (20.0%) participants reported that providing support to significant others including family, intimate



Table 2

Categories of Hindering Factors

<u>Hindering Factors</u>	<u># of participants</u>	<u>% of participants</u>	<u># of incidents</u>	<u>% of incidents</u>
1. Negative or Unsupportive People	13	86.7	17	19.5
2. Negative Emotions & Cognitions	8	53.3	21	24.1
3. Situations Outside of One's Control	6	40.0	13	14.9
4. Economic & Financial Challenges	5	33.3	10	11.5
5. School	5	33.3	7	8.0
6. Health (mental & physical)	4	26.7	5	5.7
7. Cultural Conflicts	3	20.0	6	6.9
8. Workload	3	20.0	4	4.6
9. Failing	2	13.3	2	2.3
10. Multiple Roles	1	6.7	1	1.1
11. Relationship Breakups	1	6.7	1	1.1

partners, and companion animals helped them to feel hopeful because they could see the impact of their care on their loved ones.

Family expectations.

Two (13.3%) participants stated that expectations of their families motivated them to persevere and continue working to overcome challenges and achieve goals. One participant described how she wanted to uphold her family reputation, while another described how she wanted to satisfy her parents desire that she obtain a high quality and recognized degree from a respected university which prompted in part her family's move to Canada.

Hindering Categories

A total of 87 unique hindering incidents were reported and separated into 11 categories, all of which are reported. Many of these factors directly related to significant barriers reported by

the participants. In some examples, the incidents described involved two or more categories.

Negative and Unsupportive people. The largest hindering category involved negative and unsupportive people with 13 (86.7%) participants reporting how experiences of individuals who behave negatively as hindering their experiences of hope. For example they described family, friends, professors or other people who were critical and discouraging. One participant stated, “[my mother] wants me to be like the other typical Chinese girl ... skinny and slim ... I just feel like it's not going to happen to me... [at] this point I basically feel I'm hopeless”. Other participants reported uninterested, neglectful, abusive or absent people in their lives. Abusive incidents included economic, psychological and emotional abuse. One participant described how “it was the hardest

[when dad said something like] ‘you are definitely not going to get your college fund now.’” Participants also described people who were disrespectful, cruel, manipulative, jealous or bullied others. Furthermore they also talked of individuals who were constantly complaining, wanting to see others fail or did not want or make effort to understand them.

Negative emotions and cognitions. A total of 8 (53.3%) participants reported the following feelings and thoughts as hindering their experiences of hope: fear of failure, fear of disappointing others, pressure to please others, self-doubt, negative self-talk, rumination, unreasonably high expectations for themselves, uncertainty, reactions to conflicts in values, being overwhelmed, being intimidated by competition, and negative personal evaluations. These feelings and thoughts caused considerable



inner turmoil. One participant said, "I think the biggest one for me is fear. Fear of failure or fear of not being good enough, I think, is the hardest part for me... that really would hinder my hopefulness."

Situations outside of one's control. Six (40%) participants described negative and/or unexpected situations that they could not control. These instances hindered their experiences of hopefulness by introducing uncertainty and demonstrating they could not affect some aspects of their life. Examples included: unexpected eviction from their home, the state of the environment, being bullied, social and political concerns including religious freedom in their country of birth and corruption, negative consequences of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) ruling regarding the Penn State football team sexual abuse case, and parents' divorces. One person said, "I'm a really planned, meticulous person, ... I usually have my life planned out three months in advance, so the entire idea of the uncertainty of the future definitely did add in to the removal of hope".

Economic and financial challenges. Five (33.3%) participants discussed how tuition increases, having to take out student loans, unexpected costs, seeing a friend being unable to obtain a job, and the state of the economy in the United States, contributed to their less hopeful feelings. Furthermore, partici-

pants from Penn State discussed how the financial impact as a result of the US \$60 million in fines, the ban from playing in football bowl games imposed by the NCAA, the loss of scholarships, other penalties, as well as the anticipated loss of university and community revenue hindered their feelings of hopefulness. During one interview, a participant said,

Participant: "they just raised tuition and with everything that has ... been happening at Penn State, I can only imagine it's going to go up more ... Plus it affects how many people will come into town and I'm a waitress. It actually affects my income..."

Interviewer: "because if they can't play football, people don't come to the football games ..."

Participant: "to the games, and that's where I make all my money. Because I make \$2.80 an hour, I think, plus tips. Maybe \$2.83 or something. It's minimum wage for waiters and waitresses, but it's not nice if I don't have any tables."

School. A total of five (33.3%) participants discussed the effect of poor instruction, disinterested, unhelpful and unempathic faculty, and grades as having a deleterious impact on their feelings of hopefulness. One participant said,

Sometimes when I go to talk to the professor and try to figure [something] out, it's like the professor doesn't quite get it either ... like with my

biology class ... it felt like some professors in my science majors, there's a few of them that seem like they're not very personable. So when you're trying to talk to them it's like they can't get down to your level. And so it makes you ... frustrated.

Health. Four (26.7%) participants described issues related to mental and physical health including injuries and depression as negatively impacting their experiences of hope. One person stated, "I used to be really active and then I got injured and I went into a depression and then I just started eating and I haven't been able to get back to what I was ...". Another participant talked about how the multiple injuries sustained during her military career negatively impacted her ability to attend classes:

if I've been sitting in class for a long time they will start to hurt ... and then I'll be concentrating more on the pain than class ... I have medicine for it but I can't take those otherwise I would be drooling and passed out in class.

Cultural conflicts. Three (20%) participants discussed how family intergenerational expectations and acculturation issues affected them. One participant reported difficulties in expressing and communicating accurately due to cultural and language differences. Another participant described how the differences between military and civilian culture hindered her feelings of hope.



Workload. A total of three (20%) participants who were attending university full time while also working, reported difficulties in maintaining their hopefulness in the face of significant levels of work and multiple, competing deadlines under time pressures. One person said, “freshman year I only slept 3 hours a night maybe ... I just didn’t have time ... with the way I had piled on.”

Failing. Two (13.3%) participants reported that effort/reward mismatch negatively impacted their feelings of hope. Specifically they spoke about trying their best and still not succeeding at their goals. One participant reported “I’m really disappointed since I tried so hard for [the job] ...I do feel less hopeful because I really try hard. And I still didn’t get what I want.”

Multiple roles. One (6.7%) person reported described how the different roles she plays in her and her family’s life hinders her feelings of hopefulness. She said,

I also have a lot going on in my home life with my husband and my husband’s family...He has kids, so I’m a wife, I’m a step-mother and I’m a student. And it gets kind of frustrating sometimes...if I have a lot of homework and everything but we have the kids and stuff ... I have to try to separate ... homework and spending time with the kids.

Relationship breakups. One (6.7) participant recounted how the end of a romantic relationship negatively impacted her feelings of hopefulness.

Discussion

Some of the participants’ definitions of hope align with definitions in the literature in terms of goals and/or agency thinking, as suggested by Snyder (2002). However, only one participant demonstrated pathways thinking in their definition, which is in line with Sung et al. (2012) who suggested that pathways thinking was not predictive of educational and career development skills. Post-secondary students in this study may not consider pathways thinking as essential to hope. Moreover, eight participants defined hope in a manner that aligned more closely with Dufault and Martocchio (1985), particularly in terms of affective, affiliative, contextual and temporal aspects of hope. Furthermore, some participants related hope to some meaningful future outcome, which relates to Stephenson’s (1991) definition. While some of the literature differentiates between hope and optimism and treats them as separate constructs, most of the participants used hope and optimism as synonyms in their definitions, which is reminiscent of Bryant and Cvengros’s (2004) conclusion that there is some support for a unitary conceptualization of hope and optimism. The final finding with regard to the definition of hope is that faith seemed to be an important aspect of participants’ definitions, with some explicitly

naming faith as integral, and almost synonymous, to hope. This finding seems to suggest that spirituality can be a helping factor for hope, and reinforces Ribton-Turner and Bruin’s (2006) finding regarding the importance of spirituality as a coping aid during difficult career development periods.

There is no known published research investigating what helps and hinders undergraduate students with high levels of hope relative to high levels of self-reported barriers. For this reason, it is possible to consider most of the findings in this study as unique. The strongest pattern that emerged from the findings is the positive and negative impact of relationships on experiences of hope. During the course of the interviews, every participant identified either receiving or giving support to others as positively affecting their experiences of hope. Participants cited receiving support from at least one significant person in their lives. In addition, many participants cited role models, and/or positive school interactions as supporting their feelings of hopefulness. Conversely, 87% of the participants cited negative relationships as having a deleterious impact on their experiences of hope based on interactions with either negative and unsupportive people, relationship breakups or unsupportive experiences with instructors.

Another significant theme that appeared was the influence of personal factors including internal states and environmental factors on individual’s experiences of hope. In this theme, the



internal factors that affected hope were future goals, attitude, passion, self-efficacy, social and professional contribution, refocusing activities, negative emotions and cognitions, and health. While only eight participants explicitly endorsed “attitude” as a helping factor, we observed during the interviews that all participants demonstrated the ability to positively reframe negative experiences and view them with what could be considered a positive attitude. The environmental factors that affected hope included support, role models, possibilities and opportunities, school, negative/unsupportive people, situations outside one’s control, economic/financial challenges and school. A factor that could be considered both internal and environmental was spirituality which included being involved in organized religion and praying, along with upholding values and beliefs that were consistent with their spiritual practice.

Another theme that was revealed through the data was the role of the future and its impact on participants’ experiences of hope. The future’s influence was seen by some participants as positive, while others saw it as potentially problematic. Falling into this general theme includes future goals, possibilities and opportunities, social and professional contributions, and the uncertainty of the economy.

A final theme that surfaced was the demands of school and its interactions with different obligations in participants’ lives including workload and multiple roles. Given the amount of school and responsibilities that we ob-

served, it is surprising that only four participants identified either workload or multiple roles as impacting their experiences of hope. Perhaps there is a threshold for the ability to cope with workload and multiple roles and it is possible that many of the participants were not at or over that threshold. For example, only one participant in the study was a parent. If the sample had included more parents, then more participants might have indicated multiple roles and workload could become a hindering factor.

For the factors that were reported by less than 25% of the participants, it is possible that these factors would have higher participation rates if there were more participants in the study who were older and/or more culturally diverse. As stated in the previous example, the participant who endorsed multiple roles was the only married participant and the only one with children. If the study was replicated with an older cohort that included more married individuals or parents, we may see more individuals reporting role conflicts. Additionally, had the sample been even more culturally diverse, we may have seen additional responses indicating cultural conflicts or family expectations impacting the individuals’ experiences of hope. Furthermore, given that many participants cited factors that were related to parents divorcing, it is possible that with an older cohort we may have found a higher frequency of responses for relationship breakups.

These outlier categories suggest a need for further research for had we interviewed more participants

or different cohorts of participants, different overarching themes may have emerged.

A final observation of the findings was the impact of the sexual abuse case involving Penn State’s football team which impacted the students who attended that university. Research is a snapshot of a particular time at a particular location, and the interviews at Penn State were conducted immediately after the NCAA made its announcement. The controversial events surrounding the case were widely discussed, and three of the five participants interviewed during that period identified the scandal, NCAA’s decision, and its impact as having a role on hindering their feelings of hopefulness.

Implications for Counselling and Post Secondary Career Services

Hope is considered to be one of the factors that enables individuals to change their lives and to come closer to creating the life they desire to live (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Snyder, Michael, and Cheavens (1999) argue that hope serves as a unifying framework within the counselling process. Research also suggests that hope plays an important role within the first three to four weeks of counselling, perhaps because hope may strengthen belief in the possibility of an improved future (Hanna, 2002). The current study indicates the important role hope plays in personal and career development in the face of barriers. Consequently, the findings suggest several implications for



counselling and post-secondary Career Services departments.

Given the significant barriers reported by students and their influence on their experiences of hope, the findings emphasize the need for counsellors to be included in post-secondary Career Services departments. Historically, there has been an artificial divide between personal and career counselling (Niles & Pate, 1989); these findings illustrate the reality that the personal and career interact and influence each other and therefore the need for holistic approaches requiring counsellors to be incorporated into Career Services staffing. Therefore, understanding the influence of barriers on students, and what helps and hinders their hope can inform counsellors in their work and aid in facilitating learning, coping, and positive change and growth.

Counsellors can then assess the internal and environmental factors for both hopeful students and less hopeful students. They can help students become more mindful of their sense of hope by exploring what it means to them to be hopeful, and whether they experience hope in their lives. Given the theme of relationships, counsellors should explore the significant relationships in students' lives and how they might impact hope by asking who supports or does not support them? Who are their role models? What other positive and/or negative relationships do they have currently or have they experienced in the past? Internal and environmental factors also play a significant role in hope so counsellors should attend to both.

What helps the student personally feel connected to their hopefulness? Considering the student in context, what environmental factors are present or lacking, and are they helping or hindering. Counsellors can also explore the students' feelings about their futures, goals, possibilities, opportunities and fears, and how these factors might affect hope. Additionally, consideration must be given to workload, obligations, and multiple roles that influence students' level of hope. Finally, it is also important for counsellors to recognize and attend to any internal, academic and/or career barriers that the student has faced or is currently facing. With a more comprehensive understanding of students' hope and the factors that may impact it, counsellors can utilize interventions to help students capitalize on their strengths as well as bolster hope.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the qualitative study. Demographic information was gathered through the quantitative survey, however limited demographic information was systematically gathered during the qualitative study. We did not obtain standardized contextual information apart from their field of study, their year at school, and the participants' definitions of hope. For example, we could have asked participants how they funded their education, their living and working situation, and their family background. It is possible that gathering this information could have helped to in-

form the findings.

Another possible limitation to consider is that some interviews were conducted in person and others were conducted by phone. It is difficult to know if this change in procedure affected the quality of the interviews and therefore the findings.

Finally, participants were limited to the four institutions in Canada and the United States, with only seven participants from each country and one international student. The findings represent the experiences of students at their respective institutions. The sample from the quantitative study limited the sampling for the qualitative study. For the Canadian portion of the sample, participants were recruited using a list of students who had previously accessed career services at their respective universities. The majority of the sample from Penn State, Penn College and Thompson Rivers were Caucasian while the sample from UBC was predominantly Asian. The majority of the quantitative sample for all institutions was female. Further, the sampling in the study was limited to first- and second- year students. As a result, the generalizability of the findings to other populations and institutions is limited. Replicating this study with diverse populations is necessary.

Future Research

Since there is no agreed upon definition of hope, future research could revisit and refine the concepts, particularly around the ideas of pathways thinking, the inclusion of affective, affilia-



tive, contextual and temporal dimensions of hope, the cognitive and behavioural components of hope, and further exploration of the relationship between hope and optimism. Another direction of future research is around diversity and the impact of culture. The study could be replicated with more diverse populations, such as undergraduate students with high barriers and low hope, older workers, unemployed individuals, graduate students, and individuals who have multiple barriers. Furthermore, more diversity in terms of ethnicity, nationality, sexual and gender identity, and religion/spirituality could be very helpful. Although we obtained a diverse sample amongst the fifteen participants in the study, we suggest future research with larger diverse samples to examine the impact of culture on experiences of hope. Additionally, the factors that had less than 25% participation rate but were included in these findings require more investigation. Finally, a next step in terms of research includes the development and testing of hope-centred interventions to enhance the counselling process as well as clients' experience of hope, which may help them to make changes in their lives.

Conclusions

Given the relationship between hope and change and its role in unifying the counselling process, understanding what helps and hinders individual students' experiences of hope can inform counsellors' work. Participants defined hope as a multidimensional concept consisting of

dimensional concept consisting of affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, contextual and temporal factors. The strongest pattern that emerged from the findings was the positive and negative impact of relationships on students' experiences of hope. Important themes that emerged included the influence of internal and environmental factors on students' hopefulness. The internal factors that affected hope were future goals, attitude, passion, self-efficacy, social and professional contribution, refocusing activities, negative emotions and cognitions, and health. The environmental factors that affected hope included support, role models, possibilities and opportunities, school, negative/ unresponsive people, situations outside one's control, economic/financial challenges and school. A factor that could be considered both internal and environmental was spirituality. Another theme that emerged was the role of the future participants' experiences of hope. Falling into this general theme includes future goals, possibilities and opportunities, social and professional contributions, and the uncertainty of the economy. Finally, another theme that emerged was the impact of school and its interaction with different demands in participants' lives including workload and multiple roles

There is a need to ensure counsellors are incorporated in post-secondary Career Services staffing given the interaction between barriers, personal, and career development issues. Counsellors should attend to students' levels of hope and the role that it plays in their lives, capital-

izing on the factors that can elevate hope in order to motivate and facilitate change and enhance personal and career growth.

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Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth Part III

Carolyn Acker & Norman Rowen
Co-Founders, The Pathways to Education Program

Editor's Message

This article completes the three-part series on Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth. If you have not read the previous parts, they are available at the CJCD website in Vol 12(1) pages 63-79 and Vol 12(2) pages 105-140.

In part one, the background, context, development of the Pathways program, and chal-

lenges the program was set to address were discussed in depth. Part II reviewed the successes the Pathway Program has achieved, results on the participants, impact on graduation and dropout rates, and a discussion about what these impacts and results mean. Part III concludes with the lessons learned about the Pathways program, the program design, and future implications for both the students, communities, and research.

It has been an honor to be able to present our readers with this series and we hope that you enjoyed it, and it has brought about thought and discussion. Any questions and comments can be addressed to the authors Carolyn Acker and Norman Rowen. You may also visit the website Pathways to Education at www.pathwaystoeducation.ca

Section III. Some Lessons Learned

Over the past decade, much has been learned both about the effectiveness of the Pathways to Education Program itself and about the Program as a social innovation designed to address what had been considered an intractable problem. In what follows, we try to summarize some of these lessons and offer some brief comments about their implications.

Comprehensiveness of the Intervention

Pathways is a comprehensive program of supports including academic, social, financial and advocacy to address the his-

torical dropout rate and which built on the many strengths and assets present in the community. While there are many reasons for wanting to be comprehensive, perhaps the most important is that providing multiple supports concurrently seems to be one of the factors which is related to program effectiveness. For example, Partee and Halprin (2006) noted the importance of "a holistic approach... effective programs include a broad set of strategies and services to address varying needs of young people [including]... a strong focus on developing peer support". As well, with respect to increasing post-secondary participation for those from historically under-represented groups, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Fund

(2009), concluded on the importance of a comprehensive approach in addressing the barriers experienced by young people from disadvantaged communities, by Aboriginal youth, and by those who would be the first in their families to access post-secondary education.

More than solely the need to be comprehensive, the particular program elements which comprise Pathways were designed and are delivered in a manner to address some important needs of disadvantaged youth. In his analysis of resilience among young people, Ungar (e.g. Ungar et al, 2008) identifies seven "tensions" which adolescents need to address and which require support (see below). As with factors identified related to school leav-



ing (Ferguson et al 2005), Pathways developed before these were specifically identified, though it seems more than coincidental that many of the factors and “tensions” have, in fact, been addressed through the supports provided in the Program. And the specific supports developed through Pathways are consistent with the current view of successful program including, for example, those cited by Lerner and Brand (2006) who note that “(t)he four most common supports that have proven effective [are]... caring adult advisors, academic assistance and tutoring, college success classes, and a safe environment and peer support.”

As well, data from single support programs, i.e. those focused primarily on tutoring or mentoring or financial support alone, show far weaker outcomes than Pathways¹. As one commentator noted

Low-intensity programs that provide occasional tutoring, counseling, or activities to boost self-esteem do almost nothing to keep students in school. In a rigorous experimental evaluation of ... interventions that provided low-intensity supplemental services—such as tutoring, counselling, or workshops to enhance self-esteem or leadership skills—had no impact on dropout rates. (Jerald 2007)

The approach that Pathways to Education has taken aims to be comprehensive with respect to the supports many young people need to address barriers to secondary school participation

and success, including transitions to post-secondary education. However, we would be remiss if we did not note that there has been some discussion of the need to be even more comprehensive – and coordinated – in the community’s approach to youth development in a broader sense. For example, the work done by the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University (Schorr and Marchand, 2007) concluded on the need to integrate supports for educational success with those required to address challenges of the justice system, physical and mental health systems, housing, employment, and child welfare systems, to create an overall “place-based” approach to the developmental needs of the most vulnerable young people. Pathways does, when necessary, purposefully connect youth and their families to a variety of services while deliberately maintaining a focus on the specific supports which, taken together, are most related to the goal of secondary school success.²

This is not to suggest that a broader view of what it means to provide comprehensive support may not be important. Rather, the approach adopted by Pathways reflects an understanding that (a) success in one area cannot be dependent on trying to do too many things, (b) the responsibility for developing many of the other needed supports cannot rest with a single provider, and (c) that the coordination of the range of supports requires an independent initiative, distinct from the individual service providers each of whom is strug-

gling to provide a focused service.

That said, the Harvard project did identify a number of “cross cutting” characteristics that made a broader approach to “comprehensive” possible, including

- Outreach and enrolment procedures that ensure accessibility and which maximize eligibility;
- High quality programs where “the focus, duration, frequency, and intensity of interventions, services, and supports are carefully calibrated to the needs, resources, and risk factors of young people, their families, and the community served” and which embody “mutually respectful relationships”;
- Effective management typified through well trained and well supervised staff
- Results orientation where “effectiveness is gauged by the results and outcomes”
- Connections to and across services and supports, in which “systems are designed to connect young people with basic supports, supportive networks, and specialized services”;
- Community engagement and social networks where youth are engaged and “services promote belonging, social connectedness, and the development of relationships”;
- Sustainability and Fund-



ing whereby “funding is sufficiently flexible ... (and) investments are made on terms and at levels that ensure high-quality implementation... through processes that are simple, streamlined, and focused on achieving results”. (Schorr and Marchand 2007:Appendix 4:1-7)

Although it is difficult to make a straight comparison between Canada and the U.S. because of the different social programs in Canada, these characteristics are shared by Pathways to Education. Indeed, the authors noted that the challenges of applying these “cross cutting” characteristics to initiatives which attempt to address the broader range of systems in the United States are considerable. However, from our perspective, it is difficult to imagine being more comprehensive; that is, having Pathways staff be responsible for providing or coordinating an even broader range of supports. So, while Pathways’ version of comprehensiveness may not meet all possible needs of all young people, there are clearly practical limits on the capacity of any one organization or initiative to provide a full range of more complex supports since it cannot be assumed that all young people involved in the initiative would require the full range of what is being suggested by the Harvard project.

Being Inclusive

Pathways’ development and success reminds us that the community can have great wisdom. Through the development of the program residents were clear and consistent that to have an impact on a community the Program needed to “include all the kids”; not targeting or creaming, but including all the youth. Other programs had tried to deal with a few of the “most at-risk” kids or the ones with the most “promise”. The community knew better. The reason this matters is because the stigma changes when you’re all in it together; achievement rises for everyone. The form of the supports may differ a bit, but no one is stigmatized. It may sound simple, but it’s hard to do.

An important example of this occurred routinely in tutoring sessions where the room would include those students struggling with fractions, as well as those doing calculus; those working on basic literacy alongside those writing university level essays. The young people accepted each other and these differences. It was no surprise. Rather, they understood that the same supports – in this case, tutoring – were being provided to everyone and were designed to include, rather than exclude, them and to respect their capacities, their experiences, their challenges.

And the community also clearly said that the program’s impact was dependent on supporting the young people for the duration of high school, rather than for a year or two as other initiatives had done. This was

crucial and the ability to deliver support over such a period of time had important effects including that it dictated the large size of the program. However, the most important effect was to establish that Pathways would support the youth of the community over the long haul. Making this commitment was an important component of the trust placed in the Program by the community and the young people themselves. And this ability to provide support over a (relatively) long period has been confirmed as a characteristic of effective youth development programs (e.g. Partee and Halprin 2006). This “stability” is a key in providing the opportunity for the continuity of the relationships necessary to be effective; and, at the same time, it serves as an everyday example of the need for perseverance on the part of staff and students alike.

“It’s All About Relationships”: The Role of Pathways Staff

While it should be clear, both from Pathways’ experience and from the conclusions of the broader youth development community, that a comprehensive program is needed, there has also been an acknowledgement that the role of Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) has been an important innovation of the Program. The role grew from the initial judgement that the challenges faced by Regent Park youth required a unique approach to providing support to each and every young person; and an understanding that the role needed



to embody several skills and approaches.

A first lesson in this regard is that the needs of the young people and their families required that the support and advocacy functions of this position needed to be located in a paid staff, rather than volunteer position. As the largest single cost component of the program, this decision had obvious implications. However, it proved to be an important understanding as many have referred to this role as the “glue” which holds the supports together. How these staff provide the necessary support can be understood with reference to the seven “tensions” described by Unger et al (2008):

- access to material resources,
- access to supportive relationships,
- development of a desirable personal identity,
- experiences of power and control,
- experiences of social justice,
- adherence to cultural traditions, and
- experiences of a sense of social cohesion with others.

The development of the staff role over the past decade (SPSWs, but also program facilitators who work with the mentoring and tutoring elements and volunteers) is a testament to how central are the caring relationships within a program structure of high expectations and accountability which provide young people from disadvantaged

communities with the support they need to learn to navigate these tensions.

For example, the SPSWs are the link to the financial supports Pathways provides through the tracking of attendance which holds the participants accountable for the Program’s material supports. Similarly, the advocacy (i.e. how SPSWs both intervene and support students to question their relationship to authorities in the school including teachers, guidance and school administrators) often provides experiences of both individual power and control, as well as experiences of social justice. And the development of a positive identity is often and consciously acknowledged by Pathways participants as a direct result of the support of their SPSW and flows from the trust developed over time through what becomes a primary relationship for many Pathways youth.

Part of the development of a positive identity has come from the support of staff when young people of many different cultures question their own cultural backgrounds and work through the age appropriate challenge of negotiating between their parents’ culture and expectations and those of the broader Canadian urban context.³

As well, the Program as a whole, including participation in and support from program staff involved in tutoring and mentoring, provides those experiences of social cohesion, of joining peers without the stigma which has long been attached to youth from such communities. Pathways exists as a positive alternative to the participation of some

young people in the gang culture that is, in many similar communities, a principal form of inclusion. Some have suggested that engagement with Pathways serves as a positive “gang”, by providing Pathways youth with a sense of belonging similar to the “validation” necessary for academic success.

Another important lesson from the success of Pathways’ staff has been the understanding that young people from such communities are not, by definition or circumstance, deficient or unhealthy; that is, success comes, in part, from not “pathologizing” these young people. Indeed, while Pathways was developed as a program of the Regent Park Community Health Centre, unlike other “clients” of the Centre, the young people of the community are not well served by assuming they necessarily have either physical or mental health challenges. Some do; but that number has proven to be a distinct and very small minority. While one might expect serious issues to arise from the circumstances of extreme poverty, from their experiences of war, famine, etc. in their home countries, it is certainly a testimony to the general resilience of these young people that they are as “normal” as other youth in their aspirations, their ability to respond to support, their capacity and willingness to be part of a positive culture of achievement when the supports are provided.⁴

This reality, however, posed many challenges in staffing which was consciously designed to include caring and motivated individuals from a



variety of professional backgrounds: some with social work or child and youth work training, others who are qualified teachers, others who have community and international development education and experience, and still others with little or no formal education, but a wealth of experiences with youth in similar communities. Developing a coherent professional culture was as much a challenge to the program's development as the diversity of staff was a gift.

While the counselling provided by staff is largely informal, the importance and effectiveness of the role has been summarized by Jerald (2007) as follows:

Ongoing, comprehensive, and personalized attention from counselors can reduce dropout rates even for the most at-risk students. Rigorous experimental studies have shown that programs ... that provide intensive, sustained, comprehensive, and coordinated interventions can reduce four-year high school dropout rates among highly at-risk students by one-third, and five-year rates by one-half... Programs that work use counselors as case managers who build sustained relationships with students, closely monitor each student's attendance and performance, intervene rapidly at the first sign of trouble, help students and families overcome obstacles to educational success, and teach students how to solve problems. (Jerald 2007)

Many Pathways staff, not

only SPSWs, play these roles (though SPSWs may be primarily responsible for the "case management" function). Indeed, another learning from the Program's first decade is that it is largely impossible to determine in advance which staff a given student will find that relationship with; that at any given moment, circumstances and events may find a young person relating to different staff. Therefore, one of the principal features of staffing has been to ensure that there are enough different staff available with whom each student may develop the necessary affinity and trust to benefit from the relationship. A simple example of the benefit of this approach has been the reality of some youth who will, at times, want to connect with a staff member of the same cultural background while, at other times, seeking out staff specifically not of their culture. In an effort to be "normal", adolescents need to test their identities with a variety of others.

In addition to not pathologizing the young people, another important principle of Pathways is an understanding that the important role the Program plays also has limitations. The circumstances and challenges of our young people are considerable. Pathways can support the capacities of youth from disadvantaged communities to negotiate many of the tensions Ungar describes; and Pathways can mitigate many of the effects of poverty, of un-supportive others (both adults and other young people), of the stresses of experiences of racism and sexism, etc. However, Pathways cannot change many of

these circumstances in the lives of our young people. Pathways may be able to influence, but cannot by itself, change many of the systems that impinge on students' success. Rather, the Program has been successful by helping students to negotiate their relationships with and to these systems: to schools including teachers, administrators, clerical staff; to police and the justice system; with health care and social service providers (including child welfare agencies); with their families, both immediate and extended. And the sense of efficacy in being successful in these ongoing negotiations is, as Ungar notes, a developmental need in addressing the "normal" tensions of adolescence.

A further and key factor in the success of staff seems to be their ability to be "present" for the young people. By present, we mean the capacity of staff to demonstrate their caring; to be emotionally as well as intellectually, available; to be supportive in a way which demands accountability to high expectations, and which demonstrates a willingness to work with the young person to solve problems and find constructive solutions when challenges arise. Being present is a quality well understood, though difficult to define, for Pathways' young people: they know who is and who isn't. It is the everyday expression of staff's caring and commitment. And it is a quality equally important for program managers to exhibit with staff, staff with volunteers, and agency executive directors with program directors.⁵

Just as Pathways provides



the youth with a structure through which the supports can be effectively provided, staff and volunteers similarly require a structure and process of supervision and support to enable them to be effective in their work. Frequent individual staff supervision meetings are coupled with ongoing informal support. For volunteers, an important learning from the Program's first decade is the benefit of engaging volunteers in regular "debriefing" sessions which provide the space necessary for them to explore both challenges and successes in the programming, as well as providing important feedback to program staff. These sessions, formally structured for mentors, less formal for tutors, also demonstrate the commitment of the program to listen and hear their experiences of the young people, and serve as a concrete expression of the value of these volunteers to the program and participants.

To those from social work or health care backgrounds, the complexity of the SPSW role may be understood to be a version of active case management; that is, with a focus on problem solving (sometimes through solution focused counselling) coupled with a more traditional focus on referrals for more intense supports, with an added advocacy function to support young people in dealing with particular challenges. Indeed, what separates the role in Pathways from other interventions is that all participants have access to this support, and that the structure of the support provides for young people and staff to negotiate the type and

intensity of the support provided at any given time based on the circumstances and specific needs identified by the young person. Such flexibility may be informally available to select students in school contexts, to particular young people in faith-based organizations, but is uniquely present in Pathways for all the youth from a given geographic community. While in other interventions it may be available based on particular staff "going the extra mile" for a special young person, Pathways has structured this relationship into the very fabric of the program. In this way, Pathways might be seen to organize the important characteristic of "empathy" as a central feature – and determinant – of the Program's success. Leadbeater (2011) has noted that this characteristic will be fundamental to successful social innovations in the coming years.⁶

Research: Accountability and Program Improvement

It is doubtful that Pathways to Education could have been sustainable – either financially or programmatically – in the absence of a strong research function. It has proven true, and remains so, that financial sustainability has been dependent on the ability to show demonstrable results. Given the absence of direct government funding from the outset, the program was consciously designed to include a research function that could provide simple and clear measures of success; specifically, the comparisons of attendance and credit accumulation of Pathways

young people with those of pre-Pathways students from the same geographically defined communities. After four years, these data were supplemented with comparative data on graduation rates and post-secondary participation. Those supporting the program (beginning with the Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation) have often noted the importance of strong and consistent results on these metrics as a factor in their decisions to grant multi-year funding.

Some have suggested that these metrics are far too simple and that they have come to dominate the program's orientation. It can be stated unapologetically that there are at least three reasons which justified a focus on such metrics. First, without positive and easily conveyed results few of the initial and now long-standing funders and donors would continue to provide financial support. Second, in the absence of positive results, Pathways is frankly too complex and difficult an undertaking; the time and energy, as well as funding, for the Program could be better spent in finding a more effective approach. And, third, if frontline staff have the relationships with the young people that Pathways expects, the results will, in fact, be forthcoming. While the first two of these rationales have been continually affirmed (since the results over the past decade have been consistently strong), the third has been well understood, not only in the initial site in Regent Park, but now in each of the newer Pathways sites as well.



Perhaps more important is that the research capacity of Pathways from the outset has included a broader understanding of the purpose of the research. Specifically, the Program emerged using an action research approach which has been sustained, in large measure, over the past decade. This approach is rooted in an understanding of, and in values which began from, the knowledge and aspirations of the community; and, through a disposition to engage many types of participants, continues to hold existing practices (of both the school system and the program itself) up to scrutiny. While the techniques employed have been varied, the orientation has remained one of seeking to better understand the experience of the range of program participants in an effort to both enhance outcomes and improve the program. The orientation and use of an action research approach, therefore, has been purposeful: the social purpose being the amelioration of the numerous disadvantages that confront these young people and the community (leading to demonstrably greater educational attainments), as well as the more located purpose of first determining and, subsequently, building upon and improving the specific program elements which have come to be Pathways.⁷

Whether termed action research or its “emergent learning” variant, the Program has collected data to meet both accountability and program improvement purposes. Several types of data have been important to these purposes. First, as noted, quantitative data have provided the

metrics which, in turn, support not only funding, but also the ability for the community to know that the important objectives are being met. While many assume that such simple indicators are desired only by those supporting the program financially, it is no less true for those parents (and the community as a whole) who place their trust – and their sons and daughters – in the program; they, too, deserve the assurance that the results they hoped for are being realized.

The origin of the two interim indicators – attendance and credit accumulation – en route to more definitive metrics of dropout and graduation rates owe their use to the long history of research conducted by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto (now the Toronto District School Board). In short, the studies conducted over many years and for many cohorts demonstrated the clear relationship between each of strong attendance and credit accumulation, and graduation; and, conversely, between poor attendance and credit accumulation and likelihood of dropping out.⁸

These interim indicators, however, are not solely important to assuage the concerns and inspire the confidence of students, parents, or funders. Rather, they are the basic data from which program staff are able to begin to unpack the relative benefit (or lack) that the program is fostering in its participants; and, further, it provides the basis for additional and more detailed analyses of those effects. For example, it was through a more detailed analysis of these basic

indicators that the need for additional special education supports for some youth who were not receiving them was discovered; as well, these data provided important insight into the likelihood of dropping out for students by stream (academic, applied, locally developed) and by gender. Therefore, these data are absolutely essential for an ongoing examination of effects which, in turn, spurred efforts at specific program improvements, e.g. more intensive support by SPSWs to address those students with serious attendance problems.

These data, which include dropout and graduation data, special education, standardized test results, etc., are provided annually by the school boards. This requirement, which includes the same detailed individual level data for historical cohorts in each community, poses some challenges to those smaller school boards which lack a research function – not a small irritant in some jurisdictions, though with only a small actual cost in its production. However, the agreements which are negotiated with each school board are an important expression of the relationship between the community and the school board and of the shared commitment to the success of these young people. As well, securing the required data directly from the school board provides an assurance to the programs and the public that the data is indeed beyond question. It also raises the challenge of the extent to which other partnerships are involved in securing similar data to examine the effectiveness of their



interventions.

More recently, as the Program has developed, it has been important to obtain data with respect to post-secondary participation. This has not been straight forward as the data exists in different locations: some with the two central application services in Ontario (one for colleges and one for universities), other data with the student assistance office (a provincial body), and yet other data with individual institutions. As well, for those students not proceeding directly to post-secondary studies, there is the usual challenge of maintaining contact for the purpose of both tracking and providing support for possible future post-secondary applications.⁹

Coupled with the range of basic indicators, the Program routinely has tracked several participation measures (e.g. attendance at tutoring and mentoring), again, not solely for accountability, but also to ensure that those students not sufficiently engaged are identified and supported more intensely.

Several forms of qualitative data are also examined and were structured into the local research process from the outset. These have included focus groups with students, with parents (in their first languages), and with volunteer tutors and mentors. These groups are designed specifically to gain the participants' insights into the program and its delivery; specifically, aspects of the program that are working well and those working less well, as well as to solicit ideas for addressing identified challenges. A good example of

the value of such groups came in the very first year where, during the focus groups held after the very first semester, students themselves (and parents) suggested the need for requirements to be instituted to increase tutoring attendance. As well, the same focus groups identified the students' desire for mentoring groups to meet more frequently and to locate all of these groups in the community. Through these focus groups, tutors and mentors have responded with suggestions for specific additional supports to enable them to work more effectively with the young people.

In addition, beginning in the second year of the program, "kitchen table" sessions were organized quarterly as a vehicle for parents from all cultural groups to come together with their questions and concerns about their children's development more generally, about relations with the schools, and with other institutions, etc. These more open ended opportunities provided another occasion to discuss themes related, but not specific to, their own child with a view to examining how the Program might intervene to address important needs.¹⁰

Finally, a survey of students participating in Pathways was administered annually, as were surveys of tutors and mentors.

The value of the data collected through these many vehicles cannot be overstated. Many changes to the program have been instituted as a result of the analysis of the combined data from the quantitative indicators, the surveys, and the focus

groups; with the latter providing important nuances which allowed the program to respond to the needs and/or desires of students, parents, and volunteers. This ongoing desire for "evidence-based" program improvement has been most important to the concern with "struggling students"; that is, how to better identify, and then engage, youth who remain at high risk of dropping out despite the supports being provided. Without a detailed analysis of such students and their patterns of achievement and participation, coupled with a more intense understanding of their experiences of schools, of the community, and of the Program itself, it is certainly not possible for the Program to address their challenges. The ongoing experiences of staff, while extremely valuable, must be augmented by the actual data on attainments and perceptions of those participating in the program directly.

This type of more focused research in itself, however, may not lead to effective changes. For example, an approach suggested by one such analysis led to changes in the group mentoring schedule and approach in order to address concerns about the engagement of some students. However, after two years of the revised component, the results were, in fact, little different from those that led to the change. A similar experience with a "new" approach to academically struggling students in the early high school grades also led to the hoped for alternative approach being reconsidered after results showed little difference in the attainments of such students.



While it may not be possible to have a positive result with all students, Pathways remains committed to trying to find evidence-based alternatives to support greater engagement and increased success for all participants. Stated differently, all ideas may not work; but the ones that are tried should have some basis in the identified and documented experiences of the participants themselves (including, but not limited to, the quantitative data).¹¹

While perhaps not an intended effect of Pathways' success over the past decade, a commitment to ongoing research and evidence-based program improvement appears to have become a greater part of the lexicon of other community-based initiatives, and not solely in education. For example, with increasing frequency, more charitable agencies (including, for example, United Way in several major cities in Canada) have echoed the call for the agencies receiving their funding to produce demonstrable results and/or evidence of a clear positive impact on their clients. Similarly, there has been an increasing desire of government (e.g. the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities) to have the institutions they fund demonstrate how funding for targeted groups (for example, funding aimed at increasing access for those identified as "first generation" students) resulted in specific and measurable results congruent with the stated purposes. As well, while the concern with "struggling students" clearly predates Pathways, the topic was not on the agenda of

the provincial government at the time Pathways was created, but has since become a significant part of the common discourse about the effectiveness of schools and school systems. Whether by political will or by weight of evidence (or both), the conversation about those who were previously poorly served by the system has become a more current challenge to all in the educational system, and particularly in so many communities similar to those with Pathways programs. Were this interest to be the only benefit of Pathways' first decade, it would be a useful result in itself. However, coupled with the direct and indirect benefits to the many communities, to the thousands of young people, and to our society as a whole, the impact of the Program has indeed been significant.

Community or School-Based Supports

While the general finding that young people need a caring adult has found resonance in a particular form through Pathways, the question is frequently asked about whether schools could, in fact, provide the same support. There are obviously many genuinely caring teachers and guidance staff in our secondary schools. However, there is also a legitimate question about whether this and other supports needed by so many young people in diverse, impoverished, racialized and otherwise marginalized communities can be provided in the normal, day to day functioning of our high schools.

In answering the question, it should be understood that Path-

ways developed in a particular context more than a decade ago; in particular, a political context which included the centralization of curriculum, and of school staffing, organization, and funding reforms which included the adoption of provincial policies on, for example, "safe schools", a reduction in non-classroom supports such as transportation and school-community relations staff (at least in Toronto) – changes which, taken together, had a profound effect on the latitude of local school boards and individual school leaders to address the needs of those young people from the most disadvantaged communities. This context, however, merely strengthened the resolve of residents and the Health Centre's leadership to ensure that the detrimental effects of these important challenges could be mitigated through the provision of community-based supports.

That said, the very existence of Pathways was in other ways dependent on the newly amalgamated school board. The Program was never conceived of as an alternative to school attendance, or of the mandate of the formal educational system to help young people to develop the content knowledge, skills and dispositions required for their success. Rather, Pathways seeks to maximize the opportunities for young people to succeed in rather "conventional" terms; that is, to support these students and their parents to effectively navigate the challenges of secondary schools, as well as those present in the community. The two clearly go together: both sets of "risk factors", school-based and non-



school factors (as later identified by Ferguson et al 2005), needed to be addressed. As such, the Program was always conceived as a partnership between the community and the formal educational system. It was through the success of Pathways, coupled with a change in government, that the question of respective roles emerged; namely, to what extent could and should the supports provided by Pathways be delivered through secondary schools themselves?

Several conclusions seem apparent based on Pathways' first decade in Regent Park and the initial replication of the program in several other communities.

First, it is doubtful that the range of necessary supports can be coordinated, organized and delivered through individual schools. The evidence suggests that the ability to coordinate the range of supports required is well suited to a community-based agency.¹²

Second, the perception of the young people is clearly that the relationships of trust required for their success – ensuring higher expectations, accountability and support – are most successfully established with staff outside the school.¹³

Third, even were school-based efforts to be considered, the evidence suggests that the current funding for schools does not provide for sufficient staff or staff time to be allocated to such support. Rozanski (2002) noted this by stating that the funding formula (and the programs supported through formula funding) by itself would not, in Rozanski's view, be able to close the

achievement gap. While there may have been additional funds allocated, evidence suggests that the supports identified cannot be sustained solely through the additional allocation.¹⁴

Fourth, even if a school sought to provide such comprehensive support, there is no evidence to suggest that this can be done more cost effectively than by a community-based, not-for-profit agency. There may be alternative school-based approaches which are less expensive, but these will likely include fewer (or different) supports being provided to fewer students; and evidence of successful approaches, let alone at a lower cost, is absent.¹⁵

Fifth, were individual schools, or even school boards, committed to supporting students in the range of ways structured into Pathways, there is little, if any, evidence that such supports would be more effective than community-based approaches. As Levin (2004a) noted, neither targeted nor whole school initiatives have proven to be either successful or sustainable. More recently, the Gates Foundation initiatives, also aimed at school reform, have shown disappointing results.¹⁶

In sum, there is an acknowledgement (now almost taken for granted) that the school itself need not, indeed cannot, be the sole provider of the supports necessary for student success. Whether there ever was a time when schools were actually able to play such a role for such students in any systematic way is far from clear; and, in the absence of contrary evidence, the organiza-

tion, staffing and programming necessary is unlikely to be effectively provided directly by secondary schools.

The necessary conversation needs to explore in concrete terms the proper roles of both schools and communities in supporting these young people. And this would need to be a serious discussion, perhaps eliciting our collective limitations, as much as our aspirations, with respect to providing effective support to those many, many young people who deserve the opportunity to succeed. However daunting a task it might be, there is reason to engage the difficult questions.

As Levin noted

All significant change looks impossible at the outset; the status quo looms large and the barriers look – and are – formidable. But changes do happen. If we did not believe this were possible, we would have to dismiss the idea of improvement in education. (1995:222).

Indeed, change is possible against long odds. The Pathways to Education Program is itself evidence of this proposition. More important, the improvement in learning evidenced by the young people of Regent Park – those who both individually and collectively were the “poster-children” of risk, in a community whose despair far exceeded its hope – the improvement in their educational outcomes (over ten years and now in other communities as well) has been a testament to their resilience and the community's resolve not to resign itself to the formidable barriers which would otherwise consign so



many young people to the status quo of limited life chances and a future of exclusion from the mainstream of Canadian life.

Finally, despite the importance of partnerships with local schools and school boards, Pathways has shown that important changes in the educational outcomes of these youth can be effected in a variety of circumstances. As a respected former deputy minister of education observed some years ago

It is ... important to avoid the tendency to insist that someone else has to change first - a stance that often feels satisfying but is highly unlikely to be effective... If one believes that vulnerability is largely influenced by factors outside the classroom then it will be important to take steps to broaden people's view of what is possible and desirable. (Levin 2004a:31)

Beginning a decade ago in Regent Park, and now in eleven other communities, Pathways implicitly joined this challenge and was consciously designed not to be a function of other changes. The program is predicated on the view that the supports required can in no way be dependent on changes in the schools since we have had little (though some would say important) influence on individual schools, on school board or provincial policies and practices; and Pathways results appear in varied communities and more recently in several provinces. Just as Pathways intent has not been to change schools, so its design and delivery does not assume more than the necessary good

will to see all of our young people succeed. To do so, however, requires considering a more comprehensive approach which is neither complacent about the existing system of schooling (and its differential results) nor devolves total responsibility to the community whose challenges must be addressed since neither can be successful in the absence of the other. Bowles and Brand (2009) note that the task is to

promote a vision for a comprehensive learning system that draws upon all the resources available throughout the community... They [expanded learning opportunities] improve academic performance, college and career preparation, social and emotional development, and health and wellness for youth...[and] should be viewed as a mainstream solution to help leverage scarce resources to ensure youth are well-prepared for post-secondary education, careers, and civic engagement. (2009:145, 129)¹⁷

Certainly, Pathways to Education is not yet integral to such a mainstream approach. While many observers, practitioners, policy makers, both within and outside the school system, understand the potential of such a comprehensive approach, there is much work yet to be done to realize such a vision. However, the first decade of Pathways' development, coupled with changes in both secondary schools and post-secondary institutions, suggests that a more effective, efficient and creative approach is possible which can

result in greater attainments for many more young people, youth whose potential has not been realized through the promises of the past.

While the above outlines some of the principal areas of innovation within the Program, it may be equally important to consider the ways in which Pathways might help us understand the broader landscape of social innovation which has become increasingly important in addressing complex social challenges.

Lessons Related to Social Innovation

The study of social innovation is an important emerging field with many new and interesting approaches, as well as theory. While we are far from experts in the field, our understandings come directly from the work on the ground that both pre-dated and now extends beyond Pathways as a specific innovation to address an identified challenge. It is from this background and experience that we offer some lessons with practical implications for other practitioners, as well as for those studying social innovation as a field. For our purposes we use the definition used by Social Innovation Generation Canada

"New ideas that work to address pressing unmet needs. Poverty, homelessness, violence are all examples of social problems that still need dedicated solution-seeking space. Social innovation addresses these challenges by applying new learning and strategies to solve these prob-



lems. For social innovations to be successful and have durability, the innovation should have a measurable impact on the broader social, political and economic context that created the problem in the first place”. (Social Innovation Generation Canada: 1)

When we founded the Pathways to Education Program we didn’t think of ourselves as social entrepreneurs. But, like other social entrepreneurs, we could not accept the status quo. While the dropout rate among Regent Park youth was long thought to be an intractable problem, we needed – and the community desperately needed – to find a solution. We not only had to find answers to confounding questions, we also had to fundraise for the capital to develop the innovation and sustain it. We had no idea what the outcome would be, but our process was clear: action research, built on a foundation of community development, while looking through a “systems” lens. We learned the importance of tenacity, the ability to live with potential failure, and the power of passion for social justice, and of leveraging partnerships with the private sector.

Leadbeater noted the characteristics of innovators in education as follows:

The pioneers who have created these projects are blenders: they mix principle with pragmatism, the old and the new, the cosmopolitan with the community. They are often patient and persistent problem-solvers but

deeply frustrated with how long it takes to change embedded systems. They have to be ambitious and confident to overcome sceptics and doubters, yet also humble enough to borrow and listen when it makes sense. Above all they need endurance and a sense of mission, to survive a highly protracted process in which there are as many lows as highs. They believe in education but do not see themselves as educationalists. They are creative deviants. (2012:123)

What makes Pathways a social innovation worth talking about? The evidence for concluding that Pathways is, in fact, a social innovation comes from several perspectives. First, it approached a seemingly intractable problem – high dropout rates among youth from economically disadvantaged communities – from a perspective which was, ten years ago, unique. For example, today there is an increased understanding in the literature, and increasingly among policy makers as well, that youth from these communities need a program of comprehensive supports to be effective. A decade ago, neither the government of the day nor the school board appeared to either acknowledge the extent of this challenge or how they might address it. As the local school superintendent observed when asked about supporting Pathways: “what have we got to lose?”

Second, the approach adopted was clearly new and broader in the supports provided compared to then available mod-

els (e.g. Change Your Future which targeted the few potential “stars”) or, alternatively, school based and even some community-based programs which focused on a single support (e.g. tutoring or one-to-one mentoring) for a small number of struggling youth. . The capacity to deliver comprehensive supports to all youth in a community and for the full duration of high school was and remains a unique approach and one which, while often discussed, has seldom been attempted.

Third, the focus on continual program improvement based on clear – and simple – metrics has proven a key feature for ensuring that the program remains vibrant and that staff learn and adapt to the articulated needs of the young people. This commitment to evidence-based program improvement, to produce and use such data is, sadly, lacking in many other initiatives.

Fourth, the ability to sustain the program financially, and replicate it in now eleven other communities, is a function of both the demonstrable impact of the intervention and the approach taken to funding. The social return on the investment has been documented on two occasions by the Boston Consulting Group. In 2007, and 2011 the Boston Consulting Group released a comprehensive report analyzing the costs and benefits of Pathways to society. The Report’s conclusions are impressive: the direct societal “return on investment” (SROI) for each dollar invested in Pathways was calculated at \$24 in current dollars; and over the lifetime of a Pathways graduate, the



cumulative incremental benefit to society is \$600,000.

Finally, Pathways design and development was, first and foremost, a values-driven experience; values which informed basic principles and to which we now turn. Not all innovations are values-driven, though certainly some are. Some innovations might seek to reduce costs or improve an existing service. Yet others might strive to produce revenue with which to fund other ideas. While Pathways is by no means unique in being born from an ethical commitment, the particular values informing Pathways may be a unique combination or, alternatively, may resonate with practitioners in other human services.

Commitment to Social Justice

A first value that underpins Pathways is the commitment to social justice. This is embedded in the mission, vision and values of the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC). Pathways is about levelling the playing field. We held firmly to the belief that low income students can do just as well as youth from more privileged communities if they are given the right supports. It was our desire to break the cycle of poverty that drove the Health Centre to develop the audacious vision of Community Succession. This passion for social justice was the driving force that propelled us forward and sustained us as we faced obstacle after obstacle. It fuelled our tenacity and perseverance to break the cycle of poverty. Tenacity and persever-

ance are prerequisites for social innovation. As Leadbeater notes

Radical innovation starts in the most unlikely places. It also comes from people who may seem slightly crazed, especially to those who are schooled in traditional and conservative ways of doing things. Radical innovators have to put up with being thought slightly mad by people who claim to know better. (2012:123)

Clarity of Vision, and Purpose

We wanted to break the cycle of poverty and despair and that became crystallized in our vision of Community Succession. The vision stated what the community, through the Health Centre, wanted to bring about for their future.

“The children of the community will become the future doctors, nurses, social workers, community workers and administrators of the Health Centre.”

How to turn this vision into practical action came through a purposeful action research process which led to the development of Pathways to Education. We heard over and over from parents and youth that the key to unleashing the vision was education. The Health Centre embraced this because education is one of the most powerful social determinants of health. We had no idea how a Health Centre could deal with education; however, the clarity of our vision led us to education as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and

transforming the health of the community. The action research process also led us to become clearly focused on the transition points from elementary to secondary school and from secondary to post-secondary, with the programming emphasis therefore on the high school years. This focus in turn led to the clear purpose of providing specific and identifiable supports which were based not only on the literature of best practices in the field, but, more important, on the knowledge and wisdom of the community, both parents and youth, rather than “educators”. As Leadbeater concluded, “[t]he search for innovation should not be confined to mainstream education systems. The most radical innovations may come from the most unlikely and marginal places” (2012:123).

Commitment to Community Development

Another key value was our commitment to community development. In order to build community capacity one needs to use the tool of community development. Community Development is different things to different people. To some it's a project, to others it's a process and to many it's a philosophy. As a philosophy it is grounded in deep respect for people, power sharing and a commitment to a more equitable sharing of life's resources, (Labonte 1992). Australian women's leader Lily Walker said “If you come here to help me then you are wasting your time. But if you come here because your liberation is bound



up in mine, then let us begin.” In order to practice community development the practitioner must hold the belief that the community knows both its problems and the solutions to those problems. What low income communities lack are the means to organize, amass resources and implement their solutions. The role of community development is to organize the capacity of residents, and to help obtain the resources, both financial and human, required to implement a community driven solution.

The Health Centre had done years of community development with the people of Regent Park. There was a high degree of ownership of the Health Centre by the community and there was a high degree of trust. This is the result of being an organization which responded to the community’s needs by building on the community’s assets and building community capacity. This was the foundation upon which we created Pathways to Education. Consulting with the community about ways we could achieve the vision was a natural step in the Health Centre’s relationship with the community.

In the case of Pathways the idea development process to create a proposal was a bottom up process driven by the community, facilitated by the Health Centre. The vision was shared with the community via focus groups, and we engaged in a collaborative consultation process with community members and other community-based agencies to generate ideas which could be translated into interventions that

would help realize the vision. We heard over and over that education and employment were keys to achieving the vision; with a focus on education as the determining factor in achieving better employment. Once the consultation process was completed we developed a proposal with seven different ideas for activities that we believed would help us realize the vision. It’s important to note that none of these program ideas were the Pathways to Education Program. The bottom up process of community engagement helped the community members own this vision and drive us forward. We were now accountable to the community and they were part of the development and ownership of the vision. Momentum was created and we had a “vision” and a “proposal” to bring the vision to life.¹⁸

Long Term Commitment

As a society, we need a “reality check”. There are many who want to believe that there is a “quick fix”; an easier and cheaper way to be successful. There isn’t. Reducing the dropout rate, reducing crime, increasing life chances, improving the health of the population; these things are possible – but not tomorrow, and certainly not quickly for those who have been on the outside for so long. Pathways and fundamental change in Regent Park has taken years. It took years to create the conditions and dispositions that ask “why bother?” Why would we presume they can be changed overnight?¹⁹

The challenges posed by holding to a long-term commitment are important. First, a longer time horizon is generally antithetical to governments and other funders. Indeed, this was an important rationale for the initial metrics Pathways developed and continues to rely on. Second, a longer-term commitment requires that staff (and volunteers) similarly understand that results will come in many forms, but that they will, indeed, be evident given sufficient time. Third, such a commitment needs to be communicated to community. Parents (and other residents) may be similarly impatient to see their children engaged. Finally, while funding long-term commitments has always been precarious, it is even more important in such contexts to carefully measure the expectations for program growth against the need for as much stability as can be obtained. This is no easy task. Until at least a portion of funding (likely from government) can be relied upon (by being a specific and ongoing commitment similar to how funding flows to school boards themselves), innovations, no matter how sustainable their results have proven to be, will continue to be financially insecure, despite our best knowledge that time is crucial to success.

Measurement of Outcomes and Accountability

There is truth to the adage “what gets measured gets done”. The way we have typically done things isn’t working: we have not broken the cycle of poverty with large scale impact, nor have we



changed the life chances of young people in the most disadvantaged communities. Many programs in low income communities do not have outcome measures. Most educational innovations do not produce the data needed to evaluate their effectiveness. This means there is no way of knowing if they are making a difference and/or meeting their desired outcomes. It is vitally important that one knows what you are trying to achieve and that measures are put in place to know whether or not you are on track to meet the desired outcomes. Social entrepreneurs do not accept the status quo and want to know that the innovation is making a difference. This is the point of their work. Their efforts to find solutions to intractable problems demand that they measure at least some results; that they actually attempt to show impact. We need, and the students need: high expectations, accountability and discipline to be successful. Without measuring impact the program is unlikely to be sustainable, either financially or programmatically. Most important, for Pathways to Education, the measurement of effectiveness has helped secure funding from government, corporate and foundation sectors because they can easily see the returns their donations generate to society. And, equally important, the data allows for the detailed analyses that result in evidence-based program improvement. In commenting on “services and methods” in educational innovation, Leadbeater concludes that innovation counts for little unless it produces some-

thing tangible that people can use, a product or methods that make them more productive or which help solve a problem. Our innovators have all created reliable, repeatable methods, processes, services or tools which people can use to learn more effectively. ...The kernel of these projects is a simple innovation that successfully meets a clear need. That is the basis of their credibility...

Innovators in education, if they become successful, quickly find that they are confronted with opposition from entrenched professional ideologies about education. They have to be skilled at picking their fights, building up a coalition of support for their approaches, while also winning converts away from more traditional methods. That is why these innovators are careful to show that they improve students' chances of doing well in traditional terms: completing their grades, getting through exams, following the curriculum and making it to college. They deploy novel methods to achieve these ends and they aim to provide a more enriching and imaginative education. Yet they guard their backs and maintain their legitimacy by doing a good job in traditional terms... (2012:131, 132).

Action Research

According to Stringer (2007) a basic premise of action research is that it starts with a genuine interest in the problems of a community. The purpose of the process is to help people broaden their understanding of

their circumstances so they can begin to resolve the problems they face. He further claims that action research is always carried out through a set of explicit social values. It is seen as a process of inquiry grounded in the values of democracy, equity, liberation and it is life enhancing. In developing Pathways, using action research was not merely a choice among techniques. It was a value based on the centrality of learning from the community and from the project's own development. Several principles and values have guided the application of an action research approach in the ongoing development of the Program; specifically, there is

- A problem which is real, grounded, lived; an existing challenge around which people have experience. Its motivation is not theoretical.
- A commitment to recover, understand, value and respect the specific experiences of the community in order to determine and continually improve the intervention and its elements.
- A felt need for an alternative to the existing system which requires a serious intervention; and a belief that one is possible.
- A basis in evidence – from other practitioners (e.g. literature on related programs) and from the community (e.g. youth, parents, local practitioners) – for the action/intervention that is developed.
- A commitment to “ob-



serve” (in many forms); i.e. to collect data to see if the intervention matters and how, why, and for whom it matters.

- A commitment to reflect on that evidence in order to continue to plan and act; i.e. to improve the program/intervention.

Action research is an iterative process of gathering data by listening to people and their experiences and making adjustments based on the feedback you are hearing. In order to innovate and create a “sticky” solution requires creating a community-driven vision. This is followed by engagement with the community in that shared vision in a purposeful process that will uncover the specific problems and challenges, along with engaging the community in finding solutions. This process of problem solving continues until the desired outcomes are achieved. The practitioner must be agnostic about the issue so that a form of disciplined listening can occur. After we listened to parents and to the young people themselves we learned that the barriers to success weren’t things that could be dealt with by the schools alone. The Pathways Program was designed to overcome these community-based risk factors, the most serious of which are poverty, lack of academic and social support, and turning a culture of failure into one of actual achievement. Shifting the lens from a singular focus on the school environment, to a broader focus on the community as a whole, was a driving force behind the design of the

Pathways program. Research shows that the location of the intervention in the community is critical since 50 to 60 % of the variance in educational outcomes is caused by community based risk factors, whereas a 3-6% variance in outcomes is achieved by dealing with school based risk factors through school reform. ²⁰

Risk and Obtaining the Social Venture Capital to Innovate

Public dollars are rarely available for innovation because of the level of risk. One must test hypothesis after hypothesis when trying to find a solution to an intractable problem and the risk of failure is high. There are several prerequisites to social innovation. The risks involved in innovation mean private dollars and visionary foundations must help to fund these more risky social ventures. With respect to funding educational innovations, Leadbeater has noted:

Funding for radical educational innovation rarely comes from education ministries. There will be more innovation if more resources can be made available for early stage investment and if that funding can be invested wisely in the most promising projects. (2012:123) ²¹

The social entrepreneur must “click” with the foundation leaders through an alignment of values and have a constitution able to withstand failure. Handling the risk of failure was extremely difficult. We neither wanted to let down the youth who were losing their life chances by dropping out of high

school, nor did we want to make a mistake with charitable dollars. A proposal comprised of program ideas to achieve the vision was created and after two years of numerous meetings, negotiations and several iterations to clarify ideas, we were granted funds for innovation. The negotiations and due diligence process were carried out with two separate and independent foundations. The Health Centre had a reputation for delivering on its commitments which gave us credibility. This credibility, along with our commitment to break the cycle of poverty and our belief in our vision as a way to accomplish this, aligned with the goals of the two foundations. This convergence allowed a relationship to develop and we were fortunate enough to be able to obtain funding, with both foundations willing to fund the “vision” and not just a “program”.

As well, from the outset, it was understood that governments neither would nor could support the initiative. Two reasons seem obvious: the governments’ levers for change are in the institutions they fund, namely schools, colleges and universities, so it’s logical that the decision of governments is to support increased educational attainment through the schools, rather than through community-based initiatives. Since governments are generally reluctant to fund a “vision” – particularly one from a community – without proven results, it is only after producing demonstrable impact that governments have been much more approachable and are now funding partners federally and in some



provinces.²²

However, another important lesson from how funding was sustained is that a well-run community organization is capable of pooling the necessary resources which allows many types of interested funders (corporations, foundations, individuals) to contribute and, unlike many other “sponsored” initiatives (e.g. Gates Foundation sponsored school reform), Pathways was able to ensure the program’s independence from direction by any particular funder. Few potential funders sought to influence the Program’s design or delivery in the early years; and even fewer wanted to once the success of the model had been established.

Build Partnerships to Create a Network of Resources and Support

Ashokas’ Citizen Based Initiative, states “Strategic partnerships with corporations, governments and organizations translate into new types of resources and credibility for a citizen sector organization. Leveraging networks, connections, and the influential power of a partner can propel a social mission forward and entrench values into another organizational structure—not to mention create value for both constituents”²³

Partnerships are about leverage and leverage is about increasing one’s power to act. Leverage as a strategic advantage means having the power and resources to act effectively. That’s how a relatively small group can sometimes exert tremendous

pressure. We sometimes say that a particular group “punches above its weight”. This is the power of leverage.

In their book *Sources for Good* which describes characteristics of “high impact” not for profit organizations, Crutchfield and McLeod Grant (2007) outline the importance of leveraging resources.

“Tapping into the power of self-interest and the laws of economics is far more effective than appealing to pure altruism. No longer content to rely on traditional notions of charity or to see the private sector as the enemy, great nonprofits find ways to work with markets and help business “do well while doing good.” They influence business practices, build corporate partnerships, and develop earned-income ventures—all ways of leveraging market forces to achieve social change on a grander scale.” [2007: 21]

Lydia Gilbert, an Ashoka Changemaker writes, “I am most awed by commitments that leverage the power of partnership. While one person may have a good idea, another may have the resources to move that idea forward. Sometimes you need to address your weaknesses by harnessing others’ strengths. While it can take stamina and persistence to bring together different stakeholders, these partnerships often forge real-life solutions”²⁴.

Pathways to Education started with community partners; once the community had clearly informed the plan we proceeded

to find partners who would help us achieve our goal. Corporations were approached to become partners not only for multi-year financial commitments but also, over time, for volunteer tutors and mentors, internships, and employment for the students. This requires finding corporations with similar goals and networking to get in the door and then, once in the door, to secure a long-term partnership. A win/win approach is needed to be successful and Corporations as partners offer not only financial resources, but human resources and expertise that they are willing to share. Bridges need to be built between the sectors.

Systems Thinking

In order to make large system change it is vital to understand systems theory. The basic premise of systems theory is that everything is related to everything else. A system is a set of elements, connected together, which form a whole, thus showing properties which are of the whole rather than of its component parts (Checkland 1981). We cannot understand a wider system by looking in detail at its parts because some properties only emerge when they are combined together. We often say the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, in terms of the supports provided, (academic, social, financial and advocacy), their effect cannot be understood by looking at them separately: it is all of the supports taken together as a whole that make the difference. The question “which support makes the biggest differ-



ence?” fails to recognize synergy, the fact that the effect on students’ experiences are from the properties of the whole (i.e. the supports taken together), rather than the individual supports. Another example of the effects of the “whole” is seen in the change in the culture of the community. Since the Program is for all high school youth in a particular community the stigma of being in a special program apart from their peers is eliminated. All of the students’ peers are working hard after school in tutoring and they are all eligible for special mentoring opportunities organized by the Program. Since over 90% of the high school students in the community participate, they change the community’s culture from the previous assumed failure to one of actual success, thereby demonstrating that they are not the stereotypes they are typically portrayed as in the media.

According to Senge (1990), a system’s essence is seeing inter-relationships rather than linear cause-and-effect chains, and in seeing processes of change rather than snapshots. Accordingly, systems thinking is a way of interpreting phenomena as a series of interconnected and inter-related wholes. Systems are dynamic, they change and self-correct based on feedback. Pathways to Education, particularly through the role of Student Parent Support Worker, provides the structure through which the relationships among different systems can be mediated. For example, Pathways does not attempt to directly change the parents, or the schools or the

teachers, or the justice system or police. The role of Pathways is to support students, and help facilitate positive relationships between the student and teachers or parents or police. For example, in terms of the transition to post-secondary we focused on the relationship between the student and the post-secondary institutions. Successfully negotiating the transition from high school to post-secondary is as important as ensuring a successful transition from elementary to high school. Ensuring successful transitions, requires that staff have knowledge of both the youth and the institutions.²⁵

As a system, provincially-funded secondary schools have been challenged to work with community-based partners such as Pathways who are most likely to provide the direct support struggling youth require. Governments in Ottawa and three provinces have acknowledged, through the multi-year commitment to funding Pathways’ replication in several other communities, that school-based efforts must be complemented by community based efforts which are able to establish the necessary relationships to keep low-income youth engaged and successful.

There are numerous examples of ways in which the Pathways has been able to work with formal systems, including (but not limited to) secondary schools and the school authorities; here a but a few.

As a matter of practice, some school principals have included Pathways staff routinely in case conferences of students with particular challenges. They

have asked the Pathways staff to provide the support needed particularly when specific school board staff may not be available, but increasingly from the recognition that Pathways staff may, in fact, have the strongest relationship with the student.

Pathways’ students in Regent Park have been part of “dual credit” offerings through courses delivered (as part of Pathways’ “specialty mentoring”) by the University of Toronto, Ryerson University and George Brown College. And George Brown has incorporated elements of Pathways’ approach to providing comprehensive supports to other of their “first generation” students.

Similarly with respect to relationships with formal systems, Pathways in Regent Park had, for several years, been part of orientations for police officers new to the local police division; to assist them in understanding the initiatives in the community, including the importance of, for example, young people travelling in groups to and from evening activities. Pathways (and RPCHC) staff were invited to provide input to the police in a variety of formal and informal ways, as well as in other forums (e.g. focus groups organized by the Attorney General on community policing, presentation to the Provincial Commission on Roots of Youth Violence), each of which provides the opportunity to influence how young people in such communities are viewed and are treated in the course of day-to-day relations.

If we look at the processes of change, rather than



a snapshot as Senge instructs, the success of the Program has likely been an important factor in some important shifts in the policies and practices of several institutions. Again, while these changes cannot be directly attributed to Pathways, it is likely that Pathways' approach and results have played a role. These changes in orientation and focus include school boards which, following Ontario Ministry of Education policies, have allocated staff to specifically focus on "student success", as well as providing additional guidance and social work/psychological supports. And, through an explicit focus of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, a program of support to other "first generation" post-secondary students has begun to take shape in many individual institutions across Ontario, both colleges and universities. As well, through the Ontario Student Assistance Program, the government has provided considerable – and direct – financial support for low income students to pursue post-secondary education, thereby removing an important practical obstacle to access. These are not small changes and, regardless of Pathways' influence, reflect an increasing focus on ensuring that success follows from access through the provision of concrete supports aimed at addressing shared goals and objectives.

In terms of the community as a system, made up of a multitude of sub-systems, we have seen important change. One would expect the community culture to shift over time because Pathways was designed for all

high school students living in the community and has over 90% of all eligible high school students in its Program. It is, of course, difficult to know the long term impact of the Program on the community. The program could be effective for large numbers of individual young people, but possibly not have profound long term impact on the community in terms of measurable effects on, for example, health outcomes or income distribution. We, like others, don't actually know how to measure each of many important longer term impacts (e.g. quality of life) or how to attribute longer term changes to one among several initiatives. It is extremely difficult to disentangle the effects of any one intervention from many other events in complex and changing communities. However, there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest some more far reaching impact of Pathways. For example, there is evidence that the culture of the community is changing from one of failure to success as a dominant expectation; specifically both parents and program staff report that Pathways youth now discuss their plans for post-secondary education rather than if they intend to graduate at all. As well, Pathways has been informally credited (by some facilitators of discussions around the "revitalization" of the physical housing development) with being the most positive feature of the community identified by young people in numerous focus groups. These may be small, but important, examples.

Pathways results are evidence that by focusing on im-

proving the connections between the systems results in improved outcomes for students, families and communities. Systems are dynamic and the institutions that sustain them are more likely to change and self-correct based on feedback; therefore, systems change when the stakeholders of various institutions witness changes in outcomes and results.

Some Suggestions from Pathways to Education's First Decade

To those readers working in communities and on the serious challenges that are posed by the most intractable of problems, it is important that you don't lose heart. Perseverance takes both hard work and much support. Agencies in the community supporting such work must provide that support, along with the guidance of important values – values that must be lived each day if they are to sustain those working on the ground. And practitioners need to ensure that there is a concrete commitment to evidence-based program improvement, rather than resting on the laurels of the past, however recent.

Funders need to walk the talk. Frequently there is lip-service paid to the need for longer time horizons, for incubating innovative, if not audacious, ideas and approaches, for taking risks. Funders need to concretely support, not merely talk about, each of these truths – and they are truths learned through much hard work. As Leadbeater concluded: "Independent finance was as important for these new ventures as independent ideas and insights



from outside education”.
(2012:122).

Governments, as funders, but also as responsible for important policies, need to also heed these lessons. While we believe private, rather than public, dollars are key to innovation, once established, the success and durability of demonstrable and replicable results should be “rewarded” through a funding commitment that is as stable for community-based approaches as for the traditional institutional approaches. While the latter (institutions) will undoubtedly receive the lion’s share of resources, proven models (and the communities they serve) need to know that ongoing funding – even if only for a portion of costs – is just as important as the schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. that share the goals, but not the risks, of these innovations.

Finally, after more than ten years of the Program’s implementation in Regent Park and the initial replication in other communities, it may be important to reiterate the key phenomenon identified by Rendon (1994, 2002) and Barnett (2010); namely, the importance of “validation”, particularly to first generation post-secondary students. Pathways deliberately and consciously provides “the supportive, personal, human connections that send the message ‘you belong here’” (Gandara and Bial 2001:3). In addition to all else that the Program has provided, each and every effort to raise expectations and provide the support for young people to meet those expectations begins with those “validations” and the mes-

sage they send.

While it may be possible, in some idealized world, for mass institutions to provide those relationships and convey those messages, the evidence from Pathway’s experience strongly suggests that a comprehensive community-based approach is needed and is the most likely to be effective in complementing reforms in the institutions and systems which most affect the life chances of young people and their communities.

In addressing the role of new initiatives in education, Charles Leadbeater concludes his recent book on educational innovation by noting

Innovators are finding a variety of ways to work with formal education systems. It is not easy but nor is it impossible. A larger, more fertile common ground needs to be created lying between government systems and civil society innovators.

Indeed system thinkers are moving in this direction, recognizing that innovation is often as much about creating alliances and coalitions for change, as it is about reengineering. The best way to improve a system, in the long run, is to see it as a movement in the making, a coalition animated by a common cause... Success in the future will depend on government systems and social movements being brought together. Creating that common ground will be central to successful innovation. (2012:141-142)
26

Two Outstanding Questions

While the first decade of Pathways to Education has been one of enormous success, the next several years will undoubtedly raise numerous questions, two of which we feel are extremely important at this juncture.

First and foremost is the challenge of learning from the replication of the Program in so many communities across Canada. We have deliberately not delved into the complexities of Pathways’ replication as this could easily consume many more pages and is, rightfully, its own discussion. However, as a key feature of the Program’s development was the adoption of an action research approach, it is crucial to ask the obvious question: what have we learned from Pathways’ entry into the different communities?

And there are many important differences to begin with; in particular, the cultural differences of implementation in Quebec and in a largely First Nations community in Winnipeg. But there are also differences from the original Regent Park site with its cultural composition, compared to other more homogeneous communities (e.g. Halifax and Kingston). Do such differences matter to the basic model? To the forms of delivering the different supports? To the ability or necessity of innovating in the ways that different sites have chosen to deliver the supports or relate to specific challenges in their communities?

The growth of the Program over the past number of years has already produced grad-



uates (especially from the “second generation” sites). And, with additional sites in the planning stage, surely it is time to ask – and answer – the question of what has been learned.

The second key challenge going forward is to account for the changes in the different “environments” in which Pathways has been implemented. Specifically, the effects of the 2008 recession, including its ongoing effects on the labour market for young people in particular, pose important challenges to Program staff. For example, has the weak labour market for those attending post-secondary education changed the programs Pathways youth apply to? Has it affected how they decide on post-secondary education, or even if they choose to apply? Do they continue to feel that investing in post-secondary education is a good choice and, if not, has the weak labour market negatively affected their motivation in high school?

An additional aspect of the recession, particularly evident in some low income communities, has been a recurrence of illegal activity including some violent activity not unlike what we faced in Regent Park more than a decade ago when developing Pathways. Has this violence, including in some Pathways communities, affected the ability of the Program to develop the supports needed by both the young people and the community as a whole? Has it had effects which need to be considered in adapting the supports or their delivery to address identifiable needs? Has it affected staff and volunteers in

ways that need to be addressed? And, if so, have effective supports for staff, volunteers, parents, and youth themselves been identified and implemented? What do we know now that can help to support communities through such difficult times and experiences?

There are, of course, many other questions which might arise about sustaining Pathways both programmatically and financially, just as there are with many other innovative experiments. At this juncture, we trust that those closest to the Program’s development are best able to address these challenges.

We hope that our exposition of Pathways to Education in the three parts of this article have been able to both illuminate and challenge practitioners to work toward yet further innovation, efforts that need to be even more successful in meeting the profound needs of those we are charged to serve. The privilege of working on Pathways, its challenges as much as its joys, cannot be understated. We trust that will continue to be the case for the many practitioners whose work is so very important in creating a better world for our young people.

The authors wish to again thank the Counselling Foundation for their generous support of Pathways and to the Journal for its interest in the Program and in publishing our lengthy article. And we celebrate both the Foundation’s and the Journal’s commitment to the field and to supporting and disseminating

innovative and challenging practices.

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Footnotes

- 1 See ICF International (2008) cited above. In addition, with a focus on the problem of dropout rates, Jerald (2007) concluded on the lack of effectiveness of programs with occasional counseling, tutoring, self-esteem or leadership activities.
- 2 It is possible that the approach being suggested by Schorr and Marchand reflect important differences in perspective; in particular, that it may reflect a general pathologizing of these young people, or, perhaps, is a reflection of the comparative lack of a social safety net in the U.S. especially a health system, including mental health, and supports which are generally more available in Canada.
- 3 There are many, many positive examples of individual youth who have spoken quite poignantly about this process and the respect they feel from Pathways staff in working out these challenges, some of which have been captured on a video made by Sheena Robertson in 2006 with students from Regent Park.
- 4 One example of the importance of not "pathologizing" these youth can be understood in the proposition that "self-esteem follows achievement". Unlike many

practitioners working in communities and schools with such young people who believe that increasing self-esteem is a necessary pre-condition for increased achievement, Pathways assumes that, for all but a very few, increased achievement will necessarily bring increased self-esteem. This is verifiable in the simplest sense merely by observation and discussion, over time, with Pathways participants

5 This use of being "present" is related, but not subsumed in, Scharmer's view of "presencing" (Scharmer 2000) which has an organizational learning objective and is presented as a collective, rather than individual, capacity.

6 Charles Leadbeater presentation "Harnessing collaborative, cross-sector innovation for public good"; MaRS Global Leadership Series; September 19, 2011. It should be noted that there are many initiatives, in Toronto and elsewhere, where small numbers of struggling adolescent students are mentored by staff. Among the major differences between these programs and Pathways, however, are the small number of students involved in these initiatives, the lack of an approach which is inclusive of the whole community (and all its young people), a lack of documented outcomes, and the absence of a comprehensive range of supports. This is not to suggest, however, that such initiatives are of no value. Quite the contrary: their anecdotal success suggests the primacy Leadbeater and others (including Pathways) attach to relationships as a factor in learning,



whether formal or informal, 7 Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) define action research as “A form of collective, self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out”; and Grundy and Kemmis (1981) note that “The project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a strategic action susceptible to improvement”. These are but two examples of how practitioners of action research have characterized the purposeful nature of this approach; that is, to address a matter of inequity and social justice as was clearly described by residents prior to the design and development of the Program

8 As suggested earlier, Pathways to Education, and the authors personally, are indebted to Dr. Robert Brown, Research Coordinator at the Toronto District School Board, for his abiding commitment to evidence-based practice leading to school success. Not only did he produce the original custom tabulation which provided the first community-based tracking of students, and which showed the baseline dropout rate for Regent Park, Dr. Brown has consistently provided Pathways with additional tabulations, analyses and insights into the relationships between community factors and school performance. While the ability to continue to provide data on program results has benefitted from

many at the TDSB, the consistent data analyses which have informed Pathways over the past decade is a direct result of his support. On the specific item of attendance, credit accumulation and graduation data, see his numerous reports on secondary school indicators (e.g. Brown, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2008).

9 The longstanding policy of Pathways with respect to its scholarships has been that students could defer these for up to two years since some may not know what they want to pursue, some may need additional courses (or improved grades), while yet others may follow the same path as some middle class graduates who want to take some time off between high school and post-secondary studies.

10 Topics of interest included a better understanding of the high school curriculum, differences among the “streams”, access to special education, school board policies and practices related to “safe schools”, local relations with police, etc.

11 While evidence-based approaches have long been adopted in health care, both education and social service providers have been reluctant to adopt this perspective. Indeed, many small agencies and initiatives lack the capacity to pursue a comprehensive research program or to integrate its findings in program improvement. This is an important area for funders of such initiatives and agencies to consider when making funding decisions.

12 Even where support such as tutoring is being contemplated or delivered in secondary schools, the organization of such support, including recruitment, screening, orientation, training and support of volunteers has been done by organizations outside the local school or school board. In addition, there is no evidence that tutoring, as only one support, can be effective. Rather, experience suggests that tutoring should be part of a more comprehensive program of support.

13 The considerable evidence for this conclusion includes not only Pathways’ research, but that of Ferguson et al (2005) and Bridgeland et al (2006) among others who have consistently noted the perceptions of the most at-risk students that they were essentially “uninvited” by the school staff. That many at-risk students experience a “negative school culture” (Ferguson’s term) which includes their experience of a profound “disrespect” may be unintended consequences of school organization (including size), policies and procedures; but it is clearly an effect, intended or not. It would be disingenuous to suggest that significant numbers of students don’t, in fact, feel this way; and they are the most vulnerable of students. Nor can we dismiss these perceptions by arguing that their experiences are simply their own fault. While additional training and professional development for teachers may help, the challenge at this juncture is to ensure that such experiences do not lead to further disengagement



(leading to dropping out). A specific staff role is clearly necessary to avert this effect and it is likely a role most effectively delivered by community-based staff who are otherwise connected to these young people.

14 For example, the “Building Bridges” initiative of the TDSB incorporated both in-school and community-based staff, but could not continue after its initial pilot. Nor have school-based staff with a similar role to SPSWs been provided as part of the “Bridges to Success” initiative at a particular Toronto high school. These are but two examples; and the TDSB itself has noted the difficulty of sustaining its own innovative programs in the absence of sustained funding. While the provincial government has mandated additional staff to work with struggling students, the allocation of additional teachers and social work staff suggest that the extent of need is unlikely to be met; a reality which confirms Rozanski’s conclusion.

15 There is no direct data available on alternatives which have been piloted in the TDSB and which involve similar supports. However, a limited understanding would suggest that the staffing costs would be higher, perhaps considerably, while effectiveness might be somewhat lower. For example, while the evaluation of the “Building Bridges” initiative (O’Reilly, 2005) did not include cost data, the staffing information suggests higher unit costs than Pathways and with neither of Pathways financial supports, nor, perhaps,

organized tutoring or mentoring activities. A comparative analysis of actual costs, benefits and results would certainly illuminate any further discussion, the absence of which makes meaningful comparison of related approaches extremely difficult.

16 The funding provided through the Gates initiative is considerable, estimated at \$5B, and clearly directed toward whole school reform activities, primarily through the creation of smaller schools which provide greater opportunities for student to individually identify with the school and for staff to develop the closer relationships necessary. Unfortunately, the results are far from convincing that this approach is either less expensive or more effective than more “typical” approaches. Gates himself has opined about the difficulty of having an impact and recently stated that “... the overall impact of the intervention, particularly the measure we care most about—whether you go to college—it didn’t move the needle much.” (Wall Street Journal, July 23,2011).

17 As Balfanz et al have concluded: “School districts should collaborate with community-based organizations and national service participants to provide students with the supports they need inside and outside of the classroom, especially during critical junctures along the educational pipeline like the transition between elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary education and

training. Depending on the needs of students in a school and community, these interventions could include mentoring and tutoring, participating in after-school programs, twilight and Saturday schools; developing plans with parents to boost student attendance; targeted literacy and math curricula to help students performing below grade level; 9th grade academies, career academies, and interdisciplinary teaming of teachers to promote student engagement and teacher effectiveness; and the wide range of more intensive community-based interventions to address special needs” (2010:60)

18 With respect to innovators in education, Leadbeater has noted that “Our pioneers are cosmopolitan in outlook but rooted in the communities they are serving.” (2012:123)

19 The “why bother?” story is recounted in part I of this article.

20 Lytton and Pyryte (1998) and Klinger (2000) cited in Raptis and Fleming (2003)

21 Indeed, Leadbeater notes that “[s]ocial innovators complain that government systems are slow-moving, bureaucratic, and risk-averse.” (2012:139) and that “[e]ducation systems find it difficult to promote radical innovation, in part because that kind of innovation will often come from outside the mainstream.” (ibid.:150)

22 No direct government funding was received for the first three years of Pathways. Specifically,



the Government of Ontario provided one-time funding in 2004/05 to the Regent Park program, and granted multiyear funding for a portion of the Program's costs and to support initial replication beginning in 2007. The Federal government has provided a similar multiyear grant beginning in 2011; and the Manitoba government has provided partial support to the Winnipeg site.

23 Retrieved from <http://www.citizenbase.org/strategies/partner>.

24. Retrieved from <http://www.changemakers.com/blog/the-power-of-partnership>

25 As noted in the preceding section on relationships, these transitions may be an exemplar of what Ungar has noted as the developmental need of adolescents to negotiate several tensions which include, as a practical matter, relations with schools and other systems such as health, police, etc. Negotiating such transitions is but one example of Pathways' strategic view of the importance of "systems"; that is, the ability to provide a structure through which the function of mediating discrete systems can be effective. The effectiveness of this approach does not, however, detract from the need to support other changes within each of the systems (e.g. schools, police). This has been acknowledged through the Program's understanding that its success is not predicated on changes within, for example, secondary schools, though many others (e.g. Ferguson et al) have

long suggested such initiatives as Pathways need to be complemented by significant changes in the culture and content of secondary education

26 It should be noted that, while Pathways to Education is one of sixteen innovations in education around the world that Leadbeater singled out for discussion in his most recent book, there are numerous others cited from which North American educators and policy makers concerned with success for young people in the most challenging circumstances might learn.

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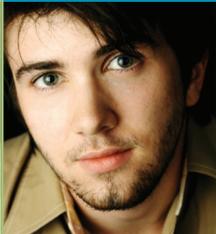
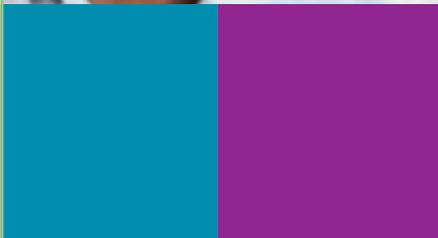
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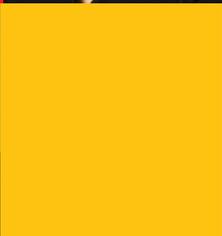
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4. Le style et le format (titres, tableaux, graphiques, citations, références) doivent être conformes au style décrit par le *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association 6e édition (APA)*.
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In this Issue / Dans ce numéro

14

Vol. 13 / No. 2

- 4 Beyond Green Jobs: Assessing Sustainability-Enhancing Career Options
Neil Baldwin
- 18 Training Pre-Service Teachers in Career Education: Developing Foundational Perceptions, Knowledge, and Skills
Mark W. Slomp, Thelma M. Gunn, & Kerry B. Bernes
- 36 Young Women Who Are Doing Well With Changes Affecting Their Work: Helping and Hindering Factors
Leila J. Howard, Lee D. Butterfield, William A. Borgen, & Norman E. Amundson
- 49 Career Counselling With Community College Students: Applicability of A Narrative Approach
Maria Timm
- 59 What Helps and Hinders the Hopefulness of Post-Secondary Students Who Have Experienced Significant Barriers
Barbara A. Smith, Lauri Mills, Norman E. Amundson, Spencer Niles, Hyung Joon Yoon, & Hyoyeon In

Research in Motion

- 76 Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth. Part III: Lessons Learned
Carolyn Acker & Norman Rowen

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