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The Canadian Journal of Career Development/ Revue canadienne de développement de carrière

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**The Canadian Journal of Career Development/
Revue canadienne de développement de carrière**

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Editorial

This edition of the Journal contains a number of interesting articles that touch on different areas of career development. In 'Career Planning in Ontario-Grade 10 Students: Counsellor Perspectives' by Peter Dietsche we are presented with perspectives from Ontario secondary school guidance staff on their perceptions of students attitudes and knowledge towards career planning. This information in addition to their views of what programs and resources are beneficial to students is valuable to every secondary school across the country.

In 'Antecedents of Educational Goal Commitment: An Experimental Investigation of the Role of Goal Abstraction, Integration, and Importance' by Gentiane Bourenghien, Mariane Frenay, Etienne Bourgeois, Stuart A. Karabenick, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles we are presented with a new theoretical model regarding the transition to college from high school. Focusing on 'goal importance', 'goal abstraction', and 'integration' their results show us the interaction between the three, and how from this a tool was developed to assist students in structuring their educational goals.

For our international students, Nancy Arthur and Sarah Flynn in 'International Students' Views of Transition to Employment and Immigration' address a much needed question; how do students transition from school to employment while applying for permanent immigrant status? The words from the students have implications for all those working in career services and counselling.

In an article based out of the United States of America, Ashley K. Chason, Emily Bullock-Yowell, and James P. Sampson Jr address an area that is applicable to all Canadian students. In 'Relationships among Career Thoughts, Career Interests, and Career Decision State' they address the relationship between negative career thoughts, profile elevation, differentiation, career decision, and satisfaction with their choices. This study shines light onto how important it is to address and explore how negative thinking can interfere with students' ability to make effective career decisions.

'Transitioning Into, Through, and out of Graduate School: A Theoretical Model' doctoral candidate Melanie J. Greene addresses the transitional pathways of students making the decisions to attend graduate school, as well as those preparing to leave or graduate. The goal of this article is to contribute to the literature on graduate education transitions, as well as present the readers with a newly developed model of graduate student transition.

Focusing on Canadian job development and labour markets, Habib Ullah in 'Job Development for Today- A Sector Specific Approach' talks about the task of job developers and how it has become increasingly complicated with the changing labour-markets and shifting job requirements. In this article he proposes that a sector specific approach will assist job developers in assisting job seekers to find employment, then goes on to show readers exactly how this will work.

For our Research In Motion section, we present an article written by Carolyn Acker and Norman Rowen co-founders of The Pathways to Education Program. In 'Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth' they present to readers information on the development of the Pathways program, the remarkable success rate the program has had in reducing the dropout rate in high school and in increasing post-secondary participation in programs such as this. They close off the article by giving us lessons learned and some possible implications for other social innovations.

In closing, my hope is that this edition of the Journal causes room for thought and debate on the areas of interest addressed by the articles within. It is only through further research, questioning, and trying of new programs that our students receive the best advice, programs, and be able to achieve their career expectations.

I hope you enjoy this issue!

Rob Shea

Founding Editor

The Canadian Journal
of Career Development

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Etta St. John Wileman Award
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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, practioner 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.

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

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

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The award recipient will be presented with a hand made Innukshuk by an Inuit artisan from Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada. The Innukshuk is made from a precious stone called Labradorite native to the coast of Labrador. Each award will be presented at the annual Cannexus 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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Career Planning in Ontario
Grade 10 Students: Counsellor Perspectives

Dr. Peter Dietsche
University of Toronto

Abstract

Despite the recognized importance of career guidance to postsecondary access and persistence, research with key stakeholders in Canadian secondary schools is meager at best. This study sought the perspectives of Ontario school guidance staff on the career planning context of Grade 10 students. Students entering the workforce were seen to have the most difficulty with career planning and university-bound students the least. Respondents suggested that most students recognize the importance of career planning and that self-exploration and broad exploratory information regarding careers would be most useful to them. Counsellors also indicated that career planning information would be best provided via interactive web sites, a comprehensive 'one-stop' web site or workplace experience. Among the resources currently available, individual interaction with counsellors and experiential opportunities such as co-operative programs or the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and computer programs such as Career Cruising were rated as most helpful. Suggestions for additional resources are also noted and the implications for current practice are discussed.

Résumé

Malgré l'importance reconnue de l'orientation professionnelle pour favoriser l'accès aux études postsecondaires et la persévérance scolaire, les recherches réalisées auprès d'intervenants clés dans les écoles secondaires du Canada sont plutôt rares. La présente étude visait à recueillir les perspectives des orienteurs dans les écoles de l'Ontario au sujet du contexte de la planification de carrière chez les étudiants de 10e année. Il appert que les étudiants qui intègrent le marché du travail ont le plus de difculté avec la pla-nification de carrière et ceux destinés au secteur universitaire en ont le moins. Les répondants ont indiqué que la plupart des étudiants reconnaissent l'importance de la planification de carrière et que l'exploration intérieure et de l'information exploratoire générale au sujet des carrières leur seraient plus utiles. Cette information pourrait être mieux communiquée par le biais de sites Web interactifs, d'un site Web complet «à guichet unique» ou d'une expérience en milieu de travail. Parmi les ressources actuellement offertes, l'interaction individuelle avec les orienteurs et les possibilités d'expériences d'apprentissage, comme les programmes coopératifs ou le Programme d'apprentissage pour les jeunes de l'Ontario, et les programmes informatiques, tels que Career Cruising, étaient considérées comme étant les plus utiles. D'autres ressources sont également suggérées et les répercussions des méthodes actuelles y sont discutées.

The dominant theories of the late 20th century posited that with adequate access to good career information and guidance, individuals would acquire the tools to make sound career decisions on their own. These decisions would result in improved human-resource allocation, labor force mobility and productivity, and improved cost-effectiveness of employment, education, and training programs (Krumboltz and Worthington, 1999). However, recent analysis of school-to-work programs globally brings this assumption into question by raising the need for individuals to locate and process information in an empowered way on top of simply providing basic information and guidance (Lent, Hackett, and Brown, 1999; Savickas, 1999; Worthington and Juntenen, 1997; Grubb, 2002).

The benefits of career guidance programs are well documented. Magnusson and Roest's (2004) meta-analy-sis and synthesis of the efficacy of career-development interventions has shown that they are by and large positive and enabling tools for Canadian adolescents across the provinces. Despite the lack of longitudinal studies and best practice analyses, many interview-based studies conclude that career planning services among adolescents in junior and senior high schools often lead to reduced drop out rates, improved employment prospects, an increase in self-esteem, more efficient use of resources, a greater supply of skilled workers to employers, changed attitudes to increased career choice, and increased motivation to continue learning after high school (McCrea Silva and Phillips, 2007; Bell and Bezanson, 2006). Some, however, have argued that career planning supports could reap greater benefits if they went beyond the typical descriptive format; there must be an active engagement with key stakeholders that goes beyond an information dump (Grubb, 2002; Walker, Alloway, Dalley-Trim and Patterson, 2006).

Barriers to Postsecondary Participation and Persistence

Numerous studies (Barr-Telford et. al., 2003; Ringer-Lepre, 2007; Malatest, 2007; McElroy, 2008; King et. al., 2009) have examined the barriers cited by high school students as reasons for not pursuing postsecondary education immediately after high school. One study in particular (Malatest, 2007), suggests an information gap exists with respect to making decisions about postsecondary studies. Less than half the high school students surveyed reported they had received enough information to make informed choices about their career path. In addition, over one third felt that high school had not provided enough information to make good postsecondary decisions. The same infor-

mation was also found to be important for persistence in that half of the respondents who had discontinued their postsecondary studies did so because they were undecided about their career and reported they had not been provided with sufficient information about postsecondary options (Malatest and Associates, 2007). Foley (2001) found that nearly thirteen per cent of high school graduates did not pursue PSE because they couldn't decide what to do. A regional analysis showed that in Ontario, more than other provinces, this reason was cited by one fifth of those who did not pursue postsecondary education. The findings across many studies are consistent in that career indecision or 'not knowing what I really wanted to do' placed second or third among the reasons given for not pursuing postsecondary education.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2009) have highlighted the need for more emphasis on career development. Their study concluded that inadequate information about postsecondary choices and the connection to careers led some Grade 11 students to discount the possibility of additional studies after high school. It also found that only a minority of participants had interacted with their school's guidance counsellors. Those who spoke to them typically reviewed grades and courses. Very few participants had approached their guidance counsellors to inquire specifically about postsecondary education and in most cases discussions with guidance counsellors took place after students had already begun considering alternatives to postsecondary studies. An important finding, consistent with the argument made by Grubb (2002), is the need to present information about postsecondary education alongside information about careers. This would not only illustrate how they are linked, but also help students think more about postsecondary education and future careers. Improved career guidance resources at the secondary school level, therefore, is clearly one way to increase college and university participation rates.

One of the first reports derived from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey (Lambert, et. al., 2004),

concluded that a lack of program fit was the major reason cited by those who had left college or university without completing their program. Ultimately, a notable proportion of postsecondary leavers stated that they had done so either because they didn't like the program or their program wasn't for them. Similarly, the Price of Knowledge (Berger et. al., 2007) concluded that a lack of career direction is a barrier to persistence in and of itself.

Findings from the 2006 – 2008 Ontario College Student Engagement Survey (OCSES) (Dietsche, 2009) also support this conclusion. The study showed that while three in five entering Ontario college students are quite certain about the type of job they will obtain when they graduate, that is they are high in career clarity, approximately one quarter are not. Career clarity was defined by a student's response to the Likert item, "I feel undecided about what my career will be after college". Consistent with the findings of Berger et. al. (2007), the OCSES results demonstrated the importance of career clarity in an educational context where most academic programs are designed to develop occupation-specific knowledge and skills. The study revealed that students who began college with significant doubt regarding their future career and the relationship between their program of study and their eventual career destination were significantly less likely to become engaged in their studies, were more likely to express a preference for working rather than studying after a few months of college experience and more strongly indicated a desire to leave. Other research, both nationally (Finnie and Qiu, 2010) with college and university students and with Ontario college students alone (Finnie, Childs and Qiu, 2010), has produced similar results.

King (2003, 2006) examined access to and perceptions of career guidance activities in Ontario secondary schools. His research found that the vast majority of students had received information from their teachers and guidance counsellors about universities and colleges. For students who had received career and educational information on colleges, approximately one-half found the information they received from guidance counsellors 'helpful' and 'very

helpful', while approximately one quarter viewed the information as 'slightly' or 'not' helpful. Additionally, two-fifths found teachers' information 'helpful' or 'very helpful', and over one third viewed the information as 'slightly' or 'not' helpful. Finally, one fifth of the students claimed they had received 'no information' about colleges from guidance counsellors and teachers.

These results are consistent with those obtained by Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson, Gunn, Bardick, Orr, and McKnight (2008) with Grade 12 students in Alberta. The authors found that most resources such as career counselling, written materials, internet sites and career fairs were only rated as somewhat helpful. It was also noted that the results confirm the importance of students being active participants in influencing the development of career services. Further, the Canadian Career Development Foundation (2003) has stressed the need to strengthen student awareness, planning and decision-making with reference to postsecondary education choices. Their study documented students' frustration with not having enough help connecting entrance requirements and courses of study with a career direction or career path; the relatively narrow focus on university as the preferred postsecondary option; the complexity of information and applications; and understanding of costs associated with post-secondary participation. Clearly, more work is required to identify the types of career information and delivery formats that will most effectively support the career planning efforts of high school students.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence for the importance of career guidance to postsecondary access and persistence, research on this topic with Canadian secondary school stakeholders outside of Alberta (Magnusson and Bernes, 2002; Pyne, Bernes, Magnusson & Poulsen, 2002; Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Code, Bernes, Gunn & Bardick, 2006; Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson et. al., 2008), is meager at best. This is particularly true for research on stakeholder groups such as teachers and guidance counsellors. The study of counsellor perceptions reported on here was part of a larger research program designed to portray stakeholder views of guidance resources in Ontario secondary

schools. Views regarding career information needs, resources and realities were sought from secondary students, school guidance staff and teachers involved in the mandatory Ontario Grade 10 Career Studies course. The nine-week Career Studies course, a major component of the Ontario secondary school guidance curriculum, is designed to help students assess their interests, skills, and characteristics and investigate current economic and workplace trends, work opportunities, and ways to search for work. The course explores postsecondary learning and career options, prepares students for managing work and life transitions, and helps students focus on their goals through the development of a career plan (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006).

The objectives of this study were to: i) identify the attitudes and plans held by junior high school students toward their future career; ii) identify the types of career information and delivery format(s) desired by adolescent learners iii) identify key players and activities that influence their career planning; iv) describe the availability, use and helpfulness of career information, activities and resources typically available to Ontario high school students. This report focuses on the perspectives of Ontario secondary school guidance counsellors regarding these topics.

Methods

Perspectives on the career planning needs and activities of Ontario secondary students were gathered via a survey similar to that used by Magnusson and Bernes (2002). Parallel versions of questionnaires were administered to students, teachers and guidance counsellors to triangulate the views of the three stakeholders groups. Areas examined included the views on the relative utility of various types of career planning information and activities, the relative utility of various formats for the delivery of career information, the relative influence of individuals and groups on adolescent career planning, and the availability, use and perceived helpfulness of diverse career guidance/information resources typically available to Ontario secondary school students.

The unique perspective of guidance counsellors was obtained with a survey conducted online during May 2010 in collaboration with the Ontario School Counsellors Association. The survey web site was publicized to all members via *OSCAnews*, the weekly e-journal of the Association. The questionnaire consisted of six sections and included both closed and open response types. In addition to employment background and demographic items, four closed response sections examined counsellor perceptions of the information that would be most useful to the career planning of Grade 10 students, the most useful format for presenting such information and who influenced their career planning the most. A final section asked respondents to indicate what types of resources were available to their students and the degree to which they believed each was helpful in supporting career planning. The questionnaire ended with two open response items probing what additional resources would help their students plan their career.

Counsellor perceptions of the most useful supports for Grade 10 students were based on their ratings of fifteen types of information or activities that could inform their career planning. These were presented in a sequence following Gati and Asher's (2001) characterization of the career decision-making process as involving six tasks. The sequence begins with a student recognizing the need to undertake the planning process followed by self exploration to identify passions, interests, and abilities and progresses to a broad exploration of types of careers available. This is followed by acquiring more in-depth, career-specific information such as annual salary, employment opportunities, required knowledge, skills and duties, information about related postsecondary programs and opportunities for financial support. The last two stages involve selecting between a few alternatives and finally committing to a single career path.

Results

The online survey of guidance counsellors yielded 144 completed questionnaires comprising 62% of Ontario school boards, 140 individual public, separate and independent schools, both English and French as the language of instruction, and all geographic regions of the province. Over four fifths of survey respondents were females employed full-time, with approximately one half having less than 10 years experience and almost one third with fifteen or more years as a guidance counsellor.

A national study (Malatest and Associates, 2009) found that only a small percentage of guidance counsellors' time each day was dedicated to career counselling. To assess how much was devoted to various student needs, counsellors in this study were asked to indicate, on average, what percentage of their time was spent dealing with student personal, social, academic or career issues. The results showed the largest percentage (40%) of time was dedicated to discussing academic issues, followed by career (25%), personal (20%) and social (15%) issues. A relatively small component, it seems, was focused on the career concerns of students.

High school counsellors support the career planning efforts of students bound for apprenticeship, college or university study or the workforce following high school graduation. Helping students identify their future destination can be quite different for each group given the differences in the type information required and in the students associated with each destination (Creed, Patton and Hood, 2009; Rojewski and Kim, 2003). To explore this possibility for Ontario high school students in more detail, counsellors were asked to rank, on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being most difficult, the level of difficulty they believe students encounter when planning for their post-graduation destination. Mean rankings by group showed that counsellors believe students headed to the workforce had the most difficulty ($M = 1.9$), followed by college ($M = 2.5$) and apprenticeship-bound students ($M = 2.7$). University-bound students were perceived to have the least difficulty ($M = 2.9$) with their career planning.

Several questionnaire items were designed to explore counsellor perceptions of the career planning of Grade 10 students. Three major areas were examined: what types of career planning information or activities were perceived to be most useful to students; the relative usefulness of various formats in which career information might be delivered; and the relative influence of various groups and individuals on their career planning.

Ideal Career Planning Information

Counsellors were asked to indicate the degree to which each of fifteen types of information or activities could help the majority of Grade 10 students plan their future career. These were presented in a sequence corresponding to Gati and Asher's (2001) characterization of the career decision-making process as involving six tasks. The process begins with a student committing to undertake the career planning process (Task 1) followed by self exploration to identify their passions, interests, and abilities (Task 2) along with a broad exploration of types of careers (Task 3). This is followed by collecting more in-depth, career-specific information such as annual salary, employment opportunities, required knowledge, skills and duties, information about related postsecondary programs and opportunities for financial support (Task 4). The last two stages involve selecting between a few alternatives (Task 5) and finally committing to a single career path (Task 6). Possible usefulness ratings for each type of information or activity ranged from 0 = *Don't know*, to 5 = *Very Much.* Table 1 presents, in descending order, the types of information counsellors rated as very useful to the career planning of Grade 10 students and their correspondence to Gati and Asher's sequence of tasks.

Between sixty and sixty-five per cent of counsellors indicated that self-exploration information, corresponding to Task 2 in Gati and Asher's list, to help students identify their interests, talents and abilities and related careers would be most useful in their career planning. One half believed that broad

exploratory information about different types of careers and related programs of study (Task 3) would also be very useful. Approximately two in five supported a mix of broad and in-depth information such as the experience of a postsecondary program, the knowledge and skills required for specific careers, and obtaining one-on-one career planning support. Approximately two in five believed that 'orientation to choice' information (Task 1) or an awareness of the need to make a career decision would be very useful for students.

One quarter of respondents believed that information reflecting Gati and Asher's final stage 6 'commitment' task would be very useful and approximately one fifth felt that students would need help deciding between more than one career plan (Task 5). Other types of in-depth information such as the salaries

and hiring potential associated with specific careers were also seen as very useful by approximately one fifth of respondents.

Utility of Information Delivery Formats

Information about careers may be delivered to students in a number of

ways including workplace experiences, conversations with individuals working in various careers, watching videos profiling specific careers or reading print or web-based text. To assess which of these formats guidance counsellors considered most useful to students engaged in career planning, they were asked, *Information on careers can be presented in different ways. How useful you think each of the following would be to students in Grade 10?* Responses could range from 0 = *Don't know*, to 4 = *Very Useful.*

Table 2 shows that almost two thirds (64%) of counsellors ranked interactive web sites involving surveys and quizzes first in usefulness and that three fifths (59%) rated the concept of a comprehensive 'one-stop' web-based tool second. More concrete, active learning resources such as work experi-

ence or speaking with people in a career of interest were ranked as very useful by approximately half the respondents. Two fifths believed that watching video-based interviews with similar content would be 'very useful'.

Influencers of Career Planning

The questionnaire item, *Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of the following influences the career planning of Grade 10 students,* required counsellors to assess the influence of various actors on career planning. Possible responses ranged from 0 = *Don't Know* to 4 = *Very Much.* Table 3 presents the proportion of respondents rating possible influencers as *quite a lot* and *very much*.

Consistent with other research findings, one half of counsellors rated parents/guardians as influencing the career planning of Grade 10 students *very*

Table 2

Utility of Information Formats

Delivery Format	Very Useful (%)
1. Interactive web sites (e.g. surveys, quizzes, careers game etc.)	64
2. A web-based tool that provides all the information needed to select a future career	59
3. Spending time 'on the job' exploring what a career involves on a day-to-day basis	52
4. Talking to people working in the career area you are interested in	47
5. Video clips of people talking about what they do in their career.	40

Table 1

Ratings of Usefulness

Decisional Task	Information/Activity	Very Much (%)
2. Self Exploration	1. Help them understand/identify their interests, talents and abilities	65
2. Self Exploration	2. Help them identify careers related to their interests, talents and abilities	64
2. Self Exploration	3. Finding careers related to the things they are really passionate about	60
3. Broad Exploration	4. Information about career-related PSE programs of study	50
3. Broad Exploration	5. Information about the different types of careers available	49
4. In-depth Exploration	6. Information about the knowledge and skills required for specific careers	40
1. Orientation to Choice	7. Help them understand that career planning is important for them right now	39
3. Broad Exploration	8. Information about what it's like to take a college / university program	38
4. In-depth Exploration	9. Obtaining personal one-on-one support to develop their career plan	37
4. In-depth Exploration	10. Information about the day-to-day tasks / duties for specific careers	29
6. Commitment	11. Help with planning the next steps in a career plan they've already developed	25
3. Broad Exploration	12. Information about financial help to continue their education after high school	22
4. In-depth Exploration	13. Information about the chances of getting hired in specific careers	20
5. Decisional Status	14. Help with choosing between two or more career options / choices	18
4. In-depth Exploration	15. Information about the salaries associated with specific careers	16

Table 3

Sources of Influence

Individual/Group	Quite a Lot (%)	Very Much (%)
Parent(s) or guardian(s)	42	51
Someone they admire working in a field/job they like	52	31
Brother, sister, cousins	49	17
Friend(s)	44	16
Guidance counsellor(s)	52	16
The media (e.g. movies, TV programs, etc)	51	15
Teacher(s)	45	9

Table 4

Availability of Career Planning Resources

Resource	Available (%)
Working one-on-one with a guidance counsellor	100
Mandatory Career Studies course in high school	99
40 hour high school volunteer requirement	99
Computer programs (e.g. Career Cruising etc.)	99
Written materials (magazines, brochures etc)	99
High school co-op courses	93
Career information sessions with guest speakers	92
Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)	90
Community agencies (e.g. YMCA, Canada employment centre, etc.)	88
Speaking with college / university guidance staff	86
Paid work experience (full/part-time work)	85
School career information centre / library	85
Groups of students working with a guidance counsellor	83
Career Interest questionnaire (e.g. Strong Interest Inventory, etc.)	83
Career Fairs/Career Days	80
Career related internet sites (e.g. myBlueprint, The Real Game etc.)	80
Job Shadowing (time with someone at their job)	65
Short videos clips showing actual on-the-job duties	63
Workplace / Industry Tours	61
Career planning / education workshops for parents	35

much. Almost one third reported that someone the student admired who worked at a job they liked could be very influential. When only considering *very much* responses, other family members, friends, guidance counsellors, the media and teachers were perceived to have considerably less influence than parents. However, combining the *quite a lot* and *very much* responses results in a slightly different picture. Guidance staff now become the third most influential group and the influence of the media increases substantially as well

Availability and Helpfulness of Career Planning Resources

The final closed response section of the questionnaire focused on the current career planning context of high school students as perceived by guidance counsellors. This was assessed by asking re-spondents to indicate whether a particular planning resource was available to students and how helpful they thought it was for those in Grade 10.

Table 4 shows the perceived availability of various career planning resources. The results show that from the perspective of guidance counsellors, a substantial number of resources are available to students in Ontario secondary schools. Working individually with guidance staff, the mandatory Career Studies course, the provincially required commitment to volunteer work, computer programs such as Career Cruising and written materials are seen as available to all students.

In addition, between eighty and ninety per cent of respondents indicated that students had access to co-operative education and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, career informa-tion in school libraries and community agencies, group work with school counsellors, dialogue with college/university staff, guest speakers, events such as career fairs and career finding tools such as questionnaires and internet sites. Information from job shadowing, workplace tours and short videos on careers was seen to be less prevalent as only two thirds of counsellors reported these were available. And only one third reported career planning workshops for parents were available.

Table 5 presents the perceived helpfulness ratings of these resources. When only considering the "very much" responses, working one-on-one with a guidance counsellor and high school co-op courses were seen to be the most helpful resources. Approximately one third rated the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to be very helpful and approximately one quarter considered computer programs such as Career Cruising, groups working with a counsellor, speaking with college or university guidance staff and paid work experience as very helpful.

Career information sessions with guest speakers and the mandatory Career Studies course were seen to be very helpful by roughly one fifth of respondents. The nine-week course teaches students how to develop and achieve personal goals for future learning, work, and community involvement. Students assess their interests, skills, and characteristics and investigate current economic and workplace trends, work opportunities, and ways to search for work. The course explores postsecondary learning and career options, prepares students for managing work and life transitions, and helps students focus on their goals through the development of a career plan (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). Other resources such as career days, workplace tours, job shadowing, school career libraries, the mandatory volunteer service requirement and print materials were all seen to be very helpful by quite small percentages of respondents.

Combining the "quite a lot" and "very much" responses results in few changes to the counsellor ratings, although the helpfulness of students speaking with college or university guidance staff and the Career Studies course in-

Table 5

Perceived Helpfulness

Resource	Helpful (%)	
	Quite a Lot	Very Much
Working one-on-one with a guidance counsellor	40	44
High school co-op courses	40	42
Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)	37	34
Computer programs (e.g. Career Cruising etc.)	40	28
Groups of students working with a guidance counsellor	31	24
Speaking with college / university guidance staff	40	22
Paid work experience (full/part-time work)	31	22
Career information sessions with guest speakers	28	20
Mandatory Career Studies course in high school	36	19
Career related internet sites (e.g. myBlueprint, etc.)	30	15
Career Fairs/Career Days	30	12
Career Interest questionnaire (e.g. Strong Interest Inventory)	37	11
Workplace / Industry Tours	28	11
Job Shadowing (time with someone at their job)	30	10
Career planning / education workshops for parents	21	10
Community agencies (e.g. YMCA, CEC, etc.)	27	7
School career information centre / library	24	5
Short videos clips showing actual on-the-job duties	27	5
40 hour high school volunteer requirement	12	4
Written materials (magazines, brochures etc)	16	4

creases. Generally, the resources perceived to be most helpful are experiential activities such as interacting with staff, more hands-on experiences such as co-op and OYAP and computer resources such as Career Cruising.

Additional Resources

The final closed response item asked respondents to comment on the following: *Would specific career guidance or career information resources assist you in helping your students with their career planning?* This was followed by two open ended survey questions, *If so, please describe what this would be in the box below* and, *Using the text box below, describe what one policy, action, resource or program would most help Grade 10 students identify and plan for their future career?*

Responses to the final closed question showed that while almost two in three (64%) counsellors agreed there was a need for additional career planning resources, approximately one quarter (23%) responded with "Don't Know". Whether this is a reflection of counsellors' reluctance to devote extra time to completing this section of the questionnaire, or whether they actually "Did not Know" is a matter of conjecture. Of those who had an opinion, however, over four in five (83%) endorsed the need for additional resources.

The first open end question elicited a large number of written suggestions for additional resources. Seventy four of the 93 suggestions could be grouped into seven categories or themes. The most frequently occurring comment (44) expressed a need for specific information or tools such as web sites that provided or integrated information in a way that is currently not available. For example, one suggestion stated a need for, *Student friendly resources on job market trends and accurate information on salaries. More comprehensive resources on jobs related to high school subjects, hobbies, interests, talents.* Another suggested, *Various pathways taken by real people on how they reached their career choice. They need to see different ways that people eventually end up in a career. See the different roads that are taken, post-secondary options available etc.*

The second most frequently mentioned theme was related to the use of Career Cruising or myBlueprint. Some extolled the value of these computer programs while others expressed the desire to have access to them. Others cited the shortcomings of what is currently available,

"Students here currently use myBlueprint and Career Cruising. It would be nice to have a current, Canadian based tool specifically for counsellors

with detailed information regarding skills/aptitudes/interests required for specific careers and perhaps suggestions for a range of careers related to skills/aptitudes/interests suited for a range of students (i.e.) college bound, university bound, etc."

Reference to greater use of interactions with others such as guest speakers, a roster of available speakers from the community, workplace visits and job shadowing was made by six respondents. Finally, five individuals identified the need for additional professional development opportunities for counseling staff especially as this related to the use of computer tools and interest inventories.

The final open ended question … *describe what one policy, action, resource or program would most help Grade 10 students identify and plan for their future career?,* elicited a total of 126 comments of which 96 could be classified into five categories. The frequency of comments for each category is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes for Additional Resources

Topic Category	# of Mentions
Career cruising/myBlueprint	24
New Information	21
Career Course	20
Trips, guest speakers	18
Professional Development	10

The most frequent comment related to the use of online resources such as Career Cruising and myBlueprint. For example, one respondent mentioned *Currently, Career Cruising seems to be the most engaging resource. Interactive game sites to learn about the different careers and pathways are very positive and well received by the students.* The second most frequent comment by counsellors expressed a need for additional resources that were a better fit for their students. For example one mentioned the need for *Comprehensive Career Interest Questionnaires adapted for high school students. JVIS and Ashland are too advanced in terms of language*

but career cruising is too simple. Another suggested, *Something to help students identify what they are really passionate/interested in and connect it to careers. Also, a way to help them communicate these ideas to their parents (who often have other aspirations for their kids).*

Many comments focused on the need for change to the Career Studies course, a mandatory component of the Ontario Grade 10 curriculum. The comments took three distinct forms. The first was the need to lengthen the course; *Extending this course to a full credit rather than 1/2 would be the best way - we simply don't have enough time to make a huge impact.* The second focused on the fact that many Grade 10 students are not ready for career planning; *I think most students in Grade 10 are too young to and immature to start thinking their future. Unfortunately our system forces them into a streamed decision at a young age in terms of their "pathway".* Some suggested that the solution to the immaturity problem was to have sequential courses with a career focus in both Grades 10 and 11, *Honestly, sometimes Grade 10 students are too young or immature so there should be a follow up course in Grade 11. However, Grade 10 students should focus more on their skills/talents and interests, you have to know yourself first to find the career that fits you.* Others expressed the desire to have more flexibility in matching course content with the characteristics of their students; *More flexibility in tailoring Career Studies program to specific needs of students in a particular school. Because I teach only university-bound students, some aspects of the current course have little relevance.*

A final category of comments focused on the need for more direct contact with authentic career information via guest speakers, job shadowing and workplace visits. For example, one respondent identified the need for, *A province-wide job shadowing program similar to Grade 9 take a child to work day for grade 10s would help, but students should be able to select from a bank of jobs, not just rely on parents,* and another cited the need for more guest speakers, *Availability of guest speakers to visit class more often for*

students to be able to speak to professionals about their careers and related careers. The effectiveness of such strategies was highlighted by one respondent who said, *I find that students get the most when I organize a Career Day and I invite community partners to speak about their jobs.*

Discussion

This study sought to describe guidance counsellor perspectives on the career planning activities of Grade 10 students in Ontario high schools. The results document their views on the relative utility of various types of career planning information and activities, the relative utility of various formats for the delivery of this information, the relative influence of individuals and groups on career planning, and the availability and perceived helpfulness of diverse career guidance resources typically available to Ontario secondary school students.

The study also examined the direct involvement of high school guidance staff in the career planning of Grade 10 students. High school counsellors must divide their time with students to deal with personal/social issues, academic issues such as course selection, and career guidance. Currently the numbers of guidance counsellors are spread quite thinly across the school population in most secondary schools making direct involvement with all students difficult. Available data (Malatest & Associates, 2009) suggest a ratio of one full-time counsellor for every 625 to 750 students, depending on school size. In addition, much of their time is spent with senior students advising and helping them to prepare applications for post secondary institutions (King, 2009). Although students are typically assigned a guidance counsellor, they may not take advantage of the opportunity to obtain career counselling (Council of Minister of Education, Canada & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009).

The results of this study are consistent with others that find counsellors devote close to half their time with students dealing with academic issues with one-quarter dedicated to career support. For example, a pan-Canadian survey of counsellors (Malatest and Associates, 2009) found one-quarter of

their time was devoted to individual career planning with the remainder being allocated to other activities. Possible reasons for this include the fact that the highest level of education for three quarters of Ontario guidance staff was found to be a B.Ed. degree and the largest proportion, two in five, had less than five years of experience (Malatest and Associates, 2009). The same study also found that in provinces offering mandatory, standalone career education courses, counsellors were less likely to spend time on individual career planning with students. So, while counsellors indicate that working one-on-one with students is available in all schools and rate this activity as the most helpful career planning resource, it appears that, in actuality, only a relatively small fraction of counsellors' time is spent on career guidance, particularly with Grade 10 students.

To further complicate matters, the Ontario secondary school curriculum supports students working toward various post-graduation destinations such as the work force, apprenticeship, college or university. This study has shown that school counsellors believe work-bound students have the most difficulty identifying a future career path, university-bound students have the least and apprenticeship or college-bound students fall in between. This finding is remarkably similar to other research on work-bound students. Creed, Patton and Hood (2009) found that work-bound students had the poorest career development and personal functioning, university-bound students the highest, with the college bound students falling in-between the other two groups. The authors concluded that work-bound students were the poorest prepared, could be making occupational decisions based on insufficient career information, a poor understanding of how labour markets operate, and with poor decision-making skills.

These results are also important in light of several studies with high school students suggesting that secondary school guidance activities are less likely to be focused on work-bound students with university being the preferred option (Herr & Niles, 1997; Rojewski, 1999; Rojewski & Kim, 2003; Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003;

King and Warren, 2006). King and Warren (2006) for example, found that approximately one third of those graduating to work said they could not or were uncertain about accessing educational and career planning supports at their school. The work of Despres (2008), however, could prove instructive in this area. The author has described a best practice in delivering a culminating career development experience for work-bound seniors that leads to their gaining full time employment upon, or shortly after, graduation.

Ideal Career Planning Information

The type of information that would best help Grade 10 students with their career planning was one of the core questions posed by this study. Counsellors rated various types of information following the task sequence described by Gati and Asher (2001) representing; (1) orientation to choice, (2) self-exploration, (3) broad exploration of the environment, (4) in-depth exploration of the environment, (5) decisional status, and (6) commitment. Each task level brings the individual closer to identifying a specific career plan.

Two in three counsellors indicated that self-exploration type information that helps students identify their interests, talents and abilities and related careers would be most helpful to their career planning. These results are not surprising and are consistent with a Grade 10 student population who are, for the most part, in the early stages of career planning. Indeed, the developmental theories of Erikson (1968) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) emphasize that adolescence is a stage of development with a focus on identity as a sense of direction and purpose. Individuals at this stage are struggling to answer not only the question "Who am I?", but also "Who am I going to be?" Not surprisingly therefore, the second most frequent response by counsellors was that broad exploratory information about different types of careers, corresponding to Gati and Asher's Task 3, would also be very useful. Smaller proportions of respondents, approximately two in five, reported that information corresponding to Tasks 1, 5 and 6 would be useful. The implication is that most counsellors believe most of the students

are beyond the 'orientation to choice' task and are aware of the need to make a career decision. Few of them, however, were seen to be at the point of deciding between two careers or committing to a specific career.

Ideal Format of Information

The ideal format for delivering career planning information was the second core question posed by this study. Options included print material, static and interactive web sites, and experiential activities such as speaking with those employed in an area of interest or work placements. While print materials and static, text-based web sites were not seen to be effective delivery formats, interactive web sites and a comprehensive 'one-stop' web tool were rated as the most useful methods for delivering career-related information. This result might be expected if, as has already been noted, only a small portion of a counsellor's time is focused on the career needs of students. Such tools allow students to access career planning information independently and reduce the workload of guidance staff. It might also be felt that the delivery of self exploration and broad exploratory information would be most efficiently achieved via computer programs or web tools. Their effectiveness, however, likely depends on the student's ability to make sense of the information they receive or else it simply becomes an 'information dump' (Grubb, 2002).

While their work context may be a significant influence, it is clear from this study that counsellors view internet resources that provide opportunities for students to explore interests and related careers as the most effective format for the delivery of career planning information. This is consistent with other research (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003) that highlights an increased use of tools such as the Real Game, Career Cruising, myBlueprint and other web-based career development resources supported by Human Resources Development Canada. Emphasis, however, was also placed on the usefulness of more authentic formats for the delivery of career information

The second format counsellors perceived as very useful for delivering career planning information was exposure

to concrete experiences and opportunities to dialogue with others. Approximately half felt that activities providing concrete and authentic information such as work placements or speaking with someone in their field of interest would be very useful. A less concrete and less interactive format such as watching a video was not considered to be as useful as actual experience. Indeed, the utility of experiential activities such as co-op and work placements has also been highlighted by others (King, 2009). Additional possibilities for obtaining career information in this way, such as visits to businesses and industries, appear to be quite infrequent for Ontario high school students (King, 2006). Other jurisdictions, however, such as the U.K. (EBP West Berkshire, 2011) have been successful in creating organizations that facilitate such opportunities on a broader scale and might serve as models for Ontario.

Established in 1992, EBP West Berks works closely with all ten of the local state secondary schools along with Newbury College. Links with the business community range from multinationals such as Vodafone and Bayer to smaller local organizations. The aim of the organization is to inspire and enable the future workforce. This means engaging with and supporting young pupils and students at all levels to better equip them for the challenges of their future working life. This is accomplished by giving young people of the region an introduction to the world of work to inspire and motivate them and above all to give them a sound footing on which to make more informed decisions about their future. The organization has successfully forged links between local employers, teachers and students, and through these partnerships they create and deliver a range of work-related and vocational learning opportunities to inspire, inform and motivate young people at all levels for their future working lives.

Career Planning Influencers

The relative influence of groups and individuals on the career planning of Grade 10 students was a third focus of this study. Parents were perceived by counsellors as having the greatest influence on the career planning of high

school students followed by someone the student admires working in a field of interest. As with other research (Knighton and Mirza, 2002; Looker and Lowe, 2001), there is ample evidence to indicate that youth look to their parents for guidance in many parts of their life and that specific parental behaviours influence adolescent career exploration (Kracke, 1997). Indeed, the term 'helicopter parent' is well recognized by postsecondary admissions staff (Lipka, 2007; Miller, 2008). Otto (2000) found that four-fifths of high school juniors indicated their career aspirations are consistent with those of their parents and parental influence has generally been shown to be positive (Grant, 2000). However, as Otto (2000) suggests, the twenty per cent of cases where the career aspiration of the child does not match that of the parent could lead to enrollment in a program of study for which the student is ill-suited.

There is also some concern regarding the content of the advice parents provide. Middleton and Lougheed (1993) noted that parental encouragement, although well-meaning, may focus only on a range of alternatives acceptable to the parent and thus may limit adolescents' career exploration and choice. King (2006), for example, found that some high school students indicated their parents felt so strongly about attending a university that they would not let them go to college. King also found evidence that parents' advice may not be substantial. A third of university and of college-bound high school students thought the career information provided by parents was 'slightly' or 'not' helpful. Focus group results with students in another study (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009) suggest that some parents were more inclined to nag their children about postsecondary attendance rather than provide them with practical information that could help them to decide what they might like to study.

While parents typically see their roles as being supportive, informative and educative, they also believe that more information and stronger relationships with teachers would help them (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko,

2005). Parents also want their children to have the "personal touch" from counsellors with respect to a plan tailored to their children's abilities and aspirations(Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003). Individual attention matters, as does assistance in gathering and understanding post-secondary education and career and financial information. However, the lack of opportunity for parents to obtain career-related information is a challenge. Few counsellors in the current study reported that such workshops were available in their school, a finding also noted in a national study of guidance counsellors (Malatest and Associates, 2009).

The relatively low level of influence attributed by counsellors to teachers, friends, the media, as well as themselves, is noteworthy and also consistent with other research (Alexitch & Page, 1997; King, 2006; Yau & O'Reilly, 2007). A potential reason for these low rates is provided by Yau & O'Reilly with a census of Toronto District School Board students. They found that more than half the students surveyed indicated that they "rarely" or "never" felt comfortable discussing personal problems with a teacher or counsellor. King's study also showed that while teachers and counsellors were suppliers of career information, one-third of students thought the information provided by teachers was 'slightly' or 'not' helpful and one-quarter felt the same about information from counsellors. While friends and the internet are also sources of career information, less than half the students in King's study reported information from friends was 'slightly' or 'not' helpful and only one half found internet information was 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.

Availability & Helpfulness of Resources

The results of this study confirm that, from the counsellor perspective, a wide variety of career planning resources are available to Ontario secondary school students. Those reported to be available to all students include speaking with a guidance counsellor, a mandatory Career Studies course, volunteering for community service, written materials and using computer

programs such as Career Cruising and myBlueprint. Of these, working one-on-one with a guidance counsellor and computer programs such as Career Cruising were also rated as very helpful career planning resources. Indeed, interviews with students and parents (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003) have shown that both groups desire greater access to individualized support. However, while counsellors report that such support for career planning is available to students, this and other research (Malatest and Associates, 2009) has shown that a minority of their time is actually devoted to individual career planning.

While the resources above show a good correspondence between availability and perceived helpfulness, this is not always the case. For example, the mandatory Grade 10 Career Studies course and the forty-hour community service requirement within the Ontario secondary school curriculum, available to all students, were rated as less helpful. The latter case is particularly interesting as a very small proportion of counsellors considered the community service requirement very helpful to career planning. This is despite the fact that experiential activities were cited by counsellors as one of the best formats for delivering career planning information. Perhaps the perception is that students are not able to use the experiences as a way to test potential career options. In contrast, paid work experience, considered by counsellors to be available to most students was rated by over half as quite or very helpful. Similar results have been found in interviews with students (King, 2009) who indicate that the experiences have helped them decide on a career path. It is possible that paid work experiences afford students a greater opportunity to select jobs related to potential career aspirations.

Other experiential opportunities to assess career options include co-operative education programs and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. While counsellors view both of these as not being available to all students, they are rated as very helpful to career planning by an overwhelming majority. Indeed, while Ontario is the province with the highest enrollment in co-op programs, counsellors have reported that only be-

tween twenty and forty per cent of students enroll in the courses (Malatest and Associates, 2009). Students, however, also cite the value of co-op programs in helping decide on a future career (King, 2009).

Additional Resources

This study sought counsellors' views regarding what additional resources might assist Grade 10 students with career planning. Two in three agreed that new resources were needed. The majority of comments focused on providing students with information of a type or format that does not currently exist. This ranged from the need for Canadian content in computer programs such as Career Cruising that is aligned with specific post high school destinations to having specific information about local job market trends and salaries. Other suggestions included increased opportunities for experiential learning via a guest speaker, job shadowing, or work placement rosters so that students could interact with those in careers corresponding to their interests or experience the career area first-hand, if only briefly. The effectiveness of such opportunities has been noted elsewhere (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003).

A second theme that emerged focused on the Grade 10 Career Studies course. This half-credit course was designed to help students with course selection and consequent career planning (Ministry of Education, 2006a). Some in this study suggested it should be a full-credit course as there was insufficient time to thoroughly cover all the material. Others noted that while the Ontario curriculum requires Grade 10 students to make course choices for Grade 11, some are too immature to do so effectively. King (2009) has also noted that for those students whose Grade 10 or Grade 11 achievement forces a reconsideration of future educational plans, additional opportunities to revise career plans are required. Another study (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003) has recommended greater infusion of career opportunities into classroom subjects and an increase in the amount of guidance/career development content and courses available in different grades. One solution suggested

in this study was to have a Grade 11 Career Studies option available. One possibility is the current Grade 11 course, Designing Your Future, a career-planning course that develops students' abilities to identify and pursue appropriate postsecondary educational and employment opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2006b). It is not clear, however, how many students actually take advantage of this option.

Conclusion

This study obtained information from guidance staff located in numerous schools across Ontario with the goal of gaining their perspective on the career planning context of Grade 10 students. A number of important conclusions are warranted. First, the current study, in concert with others, suggests that career planning for students with a workplace destination after graduation is more difficult than those who are university bound. While the Ontario secondary school curriculum supports students with a variety of destinations, the Grade 10 Career Studies course is an 'open' course and could have all destinations represented in the classroom. Other research in Ontario suggests the focus of career planning often tends to emphasize the university destination above others. This is perhaps because, given their educational background, they are more familiar with the university setting than with community colleges or apprenticeship. If so, this could exacerbate the difficulties for students who are work bound and perhaps those focused on apprenticeship or college destinations as well. Implications include the potential modification of the Career Studies course to more intensively focus on diverse destinations and the consideration of proven best practices in other jurisdictions that ease the transition for work-bound students.

Second, counsellors reported they devote a minority of their time to career planning with individual students, likely due to high caseloads and the multiple demands of their role. A mandatory Career Studies course might also contribute since guidance staff know that students can access career information in the classroom. They believed that self-exploration and broad exploratory

information regarding careers and related educational programs would be most useful to the career planning of Grade 10 students. The majority also thought this information could be best obtained via a comprehensive 'one-stop' web site or computer programs such as Career Cruising. Should this occur within the half-credit Career Studies course, which some consider being too short, the danger is that the activity could become an 'information dump' and lack meaning, especially for students whose critical thinking skills are less well developed. While counsellors rated individual support for career planning relatively low in terms of usefulness, perhaps because Grade 10 students are early in the career planning process, such personal support might help more students 'connect the dots' than is possible in the current context.

Third, counsellors also strongly endorsed experiential sources of career information such as co-op and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship programs, and opportunities to speak with someone employed in an area of interest as being very useful to students' career planning. While opportunities such as co-op programs and OYAP were seen to be available to most students, evidence suggests that few students participate. The mandatory community service requirement, completed by all students, was not rated as being very helpful to career planning although little is known about how students view the experience. While workplace tours are not as available to students and counsellors did not rate them as very helpful, other jurisdictions appear to be enjoying success with such programs and might provide useful models for Ontario. Greater exposure to experiential forms of career information seems warranted.

As with many other studies, parents were perceived to be the primary influence on the career planning of Grade 10 students. While parents are largely seen as exerting a positive influence, other research suggests some may not be aware of the complete range of career and educational opportunities available to their children or promote options that are ill suited to their interests and talents. Unfortunately, this and other research indicates that few schools offer career planning and education informa-

tion workshops for parents. Given the low incidence of individual student-counsellor contact already noted (Malates & Associates, 2009), the possibility is that parents might create a poor match between the student, a career and postsecondary pathways. If students were exposed to additional sources of career information via experiential activities such as workplace visits or job shadowing, they might be better able to moderate parental influence and succeed in following a career path better suited to their interests and talents.

This study has also shown that a wide variety of career planning resources are available to Grade 10 students. Some that are widely available are not perceived by counseling staff to be very helpful while others with more limited availability are perceived to be very helpful. In contradiction to earlier findings, counsellors indicated that one-on-one support for students is the most helpful resource for career planning and also reported that it is available to all students. Research, however, suggests a reality of infrequent student-counsellor contact for career planning purposes. The likelihood is that this resource is available to all students, in theory, but that the current secondary school context imposes strict limits. Indeed, many of the respondents in this study suggested a need for additional career planning resources developed for the Canadian high school context as well as adjustments to the mandatory Grade 10 Career Studies course.

Taken together, the information provided by secondary school guidance staff suggests a need to rethink the access to and delivery of career planning resources for Grade 10 students in Ontario. Key initiatives might include an increase in experiential learning opportunities via expanded co-operative education, the development of local guest-speaker rosters representing common career destinations and increased liaison with business and industry, as occurs in other jurisdictions, to facilitate workplace tours. Consideration might also be given to increasing the Career Studies course to a full credit or, in its absence, develop strategies such as the use of peer-tutors to help students 'connect the dots' when working with web-based tools or computer programs such

as Career Cruising. Finally, the widespread development of career planning workshops or online resources specifically designed for parents could also be of great benefit. Similarly, professional development workshops that include a comprehensive review of community college programs, apprenticeship opportunities and career planning tools rated as particularly effective by students could also be of benefit to counsellors.

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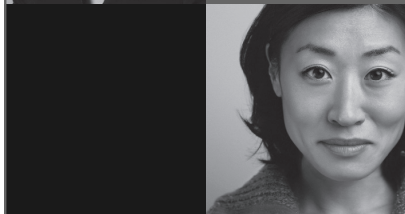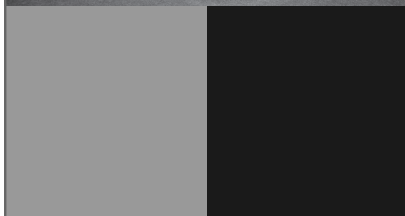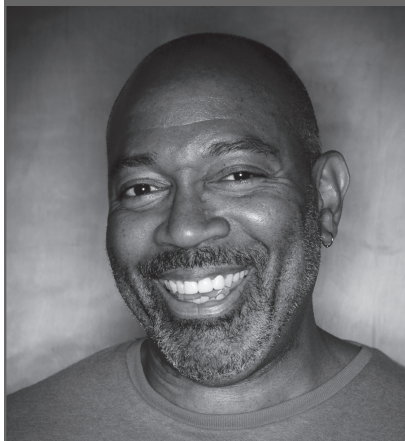
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- Write articles for **ContactPoint / OrientAction** or *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*;
- Participate in a contest held in alternate years for CERIC to **publish a relevant thesis**;
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- rédiger des articles pour **ContactPoint / OrientAction** ou pour la *Revue canadienne de développement de carrière*;
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- interagir avec d'autres étudiants(es) des cycles supérieurs grâce au **réseau GSEP**, groupe spécialisé de LinkedIn.

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Antecedents of Educational Goal Commitment: An Experimental Investigation of the Role of Goal Abstraction, Integration, and Importance

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Abstract

This study investigated the antecedents of educational goal commitment regarding the transition from high school to college among 702 high-school students. A theoretical model based on assumptions from the expectancy-value framework (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) and the hierarchical goal structure (Carver & Scheier, 1998) was tested. This model is composed of one proximal antecedent—goal importance—and two distal antecedents—goal abstraction and integration. The distal antecedents were experimentally manipulated. The results showed that (a) goal commitment is influenced by goal abstraction and integration, and (b) goal importance is a mediator of this effect. In addition to theoretical implications, a suggested pragmatic outcome is the development of a tool to guide students in the more effective structuring of their educational goals.

Students' commitment to their educational goal at the end of high school has been shown to be an important predictor of choice actualization, commitment to the chosen field of study, and academic adjustment in higher education. These factors are in turn predictive of college students' academic achievement (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007). However, we know much less about the factors that influence this commitment. Identifying these factors is crucial to guiding students in the construction of their educational goals and helping them achieve their plans.

Educational goals are the goals that students pursue when choosing their program of study. Goal commitment is defined as the extent to which a particular goal is associated with a strong sense of determination and with the willingness to invest effort in attaining it (Brunstein, 1993; Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). The antecedents of goal commitment have mainly been investigated for assigned goals in the framework of goal-setting theory (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). Research is needed to explore how commitment to personal goals develops. A theoretical model of the factors influencing the commitment to personal (educational) goals has been suggested by Boudrenghien, Frenay, Bourgeois, Karabenick, and Eccles (submitted). The present study is aimed at empirically testing most of the assumptions of this model. They are presented below.

Goal commitment is hypothesized to be directly influenced by goal importance. This assumption is supported by several theoretical and empirical arguments. The expectancy-value model assumes a direct impact of attainment value (i.e., the personal importance of doing well at a given task) on task choice (i.e., the decision of whether or not to begin or continue to invest effort in the task) (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Several empirical studies have applied this assumption to the study of goals and confirmed that goal commitment is influenced by goal value or goal importance (Boudrenghien, Frenay, & Bourgeois, 2011; Klinger, Barta, & Maxeiner, 1980).

Two distal antecedents are postulated to indirectly influence goal commitment, through their impact on goal importance. Carver and Scheier (1998) suggest that the importance of a goal is influenced by its position within an individual's goal hierarchy, which is determined by its degree of integration and level of abstraction. We define the degree of integration of a goal as the extent to which the goal is linked to other goals within the hierarchy. A goal that is linked to other goals is supposed to be more important than an isolated goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). Moreover, a goal that is formulated at a high level of abstraction concerns being a particular kind of person (a be-goal), whereas a goal that is formulated at a low level of abstraction concerns completing a particular kind of action (a do-goal) (Carver & Scheier, 1998). A be-goal is represented in the higher levels of the hierarchical goal structure and generally applies for a long time, whereas a do-goal is represented in the lower levels of the structure and generally applies for a short time. Carver & Scheier (1998) argue that be-goals are more fundamental to the over-riding sense of self and are therefore intrinsically more important than do-goals.

Abstraction level and degree of integration have rarely been empirically studied with reference to the model developed by Carver and Scheier

(1998). Other theories have been empirically tested, but these studies have focused on only one of the two dimensions (Emmons, 1992; Sheldon & Emmons, 1995; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Vallacher & Wegner, 1989). To the best of our knowledge, only one study has investigated both dimensions (Boudrenghien et al., 2011). This study showed a mediation of the impacts of goal abstraction and integration on goal commitment, by goal importance. However, its correlational design did not allow causal relationships to be tested.

The present study is aimed at experimentally investigating the impact of goal abstraction and integration on goal commitment and importance. In addition to the positive main effect of each of these distal antecedents, we postulate an interaction effect. Based on the well-known assumption that distal goals result in lower motivation than proximal ones (e.g., Locke & Latham, 2002; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989), we suggest that be-goals do not always enhance goal commitment. The interaction effect we postulate takes into account these two contradictory assumptions concerning the impact of abstraction on motivation. We hypothesize that the positive impact of abstraction on goal commitment (assumed by Carver and Scheier, 1998) appear when the goal is perceived as highly integrated. This interest in combining high levels of abstraction and integration is in line with Bandura's (1986) assumption that we need to combine distal aspirations (i.e., be-goals) with proximal self-guidance (i.e., integration with other goals, including concrete ones) to obtain the best personal development. However, we hypothesize that, in circumstances of low integration, we will observe the negative impact of abstraction assumed by Locke and Latham (2002). When there is not much integration, the focus on a be-goal, which is too far off to undertake actions in immediate situations, is not (sufficiently) compensated for by an awareness of the concrete hierarchical paths to progress toward this goal. On the contrary, the focus on a do-goal compensates for this lack of integration by giving a clearer idea of the actions which need to be completed. This reasoning suggests that, when the goal is rather isolated, the lower the level of abstraction, the greater the commitment.

We formulated three hypotheses, one for each main effect and one for the interaction effect. The combination of these hypotheses within the same theoretical model (Boudrenghien et al., submitted) implies that the positive impact of abstraction when integration is high should be stronger than its negative impact when integration is low. The main effects as well as the interaction effect are assumed to be mediated by goal importance.

Hypothesis 1. The higher the level of abstraction of a goal, the greater the commitment to this goal, because of the increased goal importance.

Hypothesis 2. The higher the degree of integration of a goal, the greater the commitment to this goal, because of the increased goal importance.

Hypothesis 3. When a goal is highly integrated, the higher the level of goal abstraction, the greater the commitment to this goal, because of the increased goal importance. When a goal is not much integrated, the higher the level of goal abstraction, the lower the commitment to this goal, because of the decreased goal importance.

Method

Design and Participants

This study employed a 2 (abstraction level: high or low) x 2 (degree of integration: integrated or unintegrated) between-participants design. Data were collected from March to May 2008 in nine French-speaking high schools in Belgium. The sample consisted of 702 Grade 12 students enrolled in a comprehensive education program. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: 175 students, to condition *a* (high level of abstraction plus integration); 175 students, to condition *b* (high level of abstraction but unintegrated); 179 students, to condition *c* (low level of abstraction plus integration); and 173 students, to condition *d* (low level of abstraction and unintegrated). Some 49.7% of the participants were female and 44.7% were male (39 missing values); 68.9% of them had their eighteenth birthday in 2008 (4.8% were younger and 21.8%, older) (31 missing values).

Procedure

Data were collected in class, during 50-minute sessions. Each student received a document including all the instructions, measures, and manipulations. Four documents were developed, one for each condition. In each class, we randomly gave out the four types of documents, which were not distinguishable from their cover page. In all four documents, the experiment proceeded in three steps and took approximately 40 minutes. First, the participants completed a self-report questionnaire. They were asked to imagine that they had to pick a program of study at college now, and to write down the educational goal they were pursuing by choosing this program. Students provided information concerning this goal, which allowed us to collect baseline measures. Second, goal abstraction and integration were manipulated (see below). Finally, a second self-report questionnaire was administered. It again asked the students to give their educational goal, and then measured goal commitment and its antecedents. At the end of the study, the participants were debriefed.

The objective of the manipulation of the abstraction level was to make students adopt either an abstract expression of their educational goal (worded in terms of a be-goal) or a concrete expression (worded in terms of a do-goal). Students were asked to select the one that suited them best from three expressions of educational goals. Depending on the condition to which the participant had been assigned (high or low level of abstraction), the expressions among which he/she had to choose were either all worded in terms of a be-goal or all worded in terms of a do-goal. Students assigned to the high level of abstraction condition were presented with the three following be-goals: "to be a person working in this domain" "to be competent in this

domain", and "to be recognized by people working in this domain". By contrast, students assigned to the low level of abstraction condition had to choose between the following do-goals: "to attend courses in this domain", "to train myself in this domain", and "to study in this domain".

condition to which the participant had been assigned. Students in the integrated condition were told that most people perceived their goals as highly linked, and were given some examples of this perception (e.g., in order to become competent in medicine, it is of course necessary to succeed in high

related to this goal on the hierarchical diagram represented on Figure 1 (be-goals in Line 1 and do-goals in Line 2). To be consistent with the manipulation of abstraction level, if they had been assigned to the condition of a high level of abstraction they were asked to write their educational goal in Line 1, whereas if they had been assigned to the condition of a low level of abstraction they were asked to write it in Line 2.

Students in the unintegrated condition were told that most people perceived their goals as isolated, as belonging to different life spheres. Some examples of this perception were given (e.g., that the goal of becoming competent in medicine has got nothing to do with other goals pursued in life, such as to be a good parent). Then, these students were asked to indicate which of the goals they had selected from the two lists were different from their educational goal and belonged to other life spheres than the study/work sphere. Finally, these participants were presented with a diagram showing five life spheres (Figure 2), and asked to write their educational goal in the study/work sphere and their other (different) goals in the other spheres as appropriate.
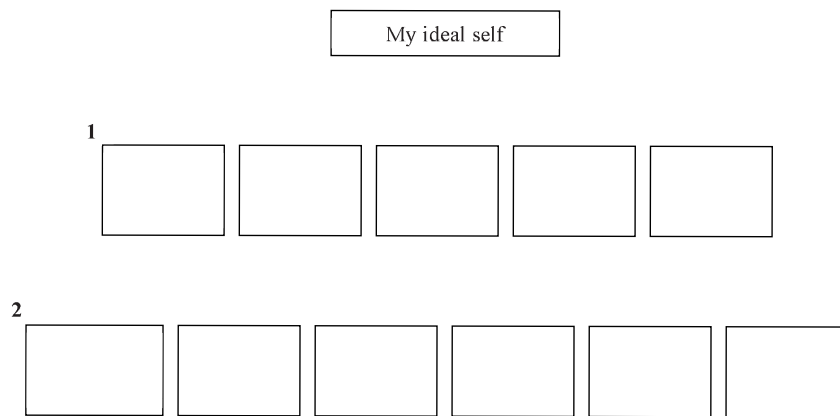
Fig. 1 Hierarchical diagram used for manipulation in the integrated condition

The objective of the integration manipulation was to encourage students to perceive their educational goal as either linked to, or isolated from, other goals in their life. All the students were asked to select the goals they pursued in their life from a list of 30 be-goals and a list of 30 do-goals. The next three steps were different depending on the

school, but it could also be important to do a student job, for example in the medical domain). Then, these students were asked to indicate which of the goals they had selected from the two lists were related to their educational goal. Finally, these participants were asked to write down their educational goal and the other goals that were

Measures

Most items on the self-report questionnaires were rated on 5-point Likert-type scales, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The exceptions are presented below.

Abstraction level.

As explained above, before and after the manipulations, participants were asked to state their educational goal. The expressions students used to formulate their educational goal were coded for their level of abstraction on a scale from 0 to 2. Code 2 was attributed to an expression that relates to being a certain kind of person (high level of abstraction). Code 0 was attributed to an expression that relates to doing a certain kind of thing (low level of abstraction). If the expression mixes characteristics from both levels of abstraction, it was coded 1. This coding was conducted by the first author using a blind procedure (i.e., without knowing the experimental

Fig. 2 Life-spheres diagram used for manipulation in the unintegrated condition

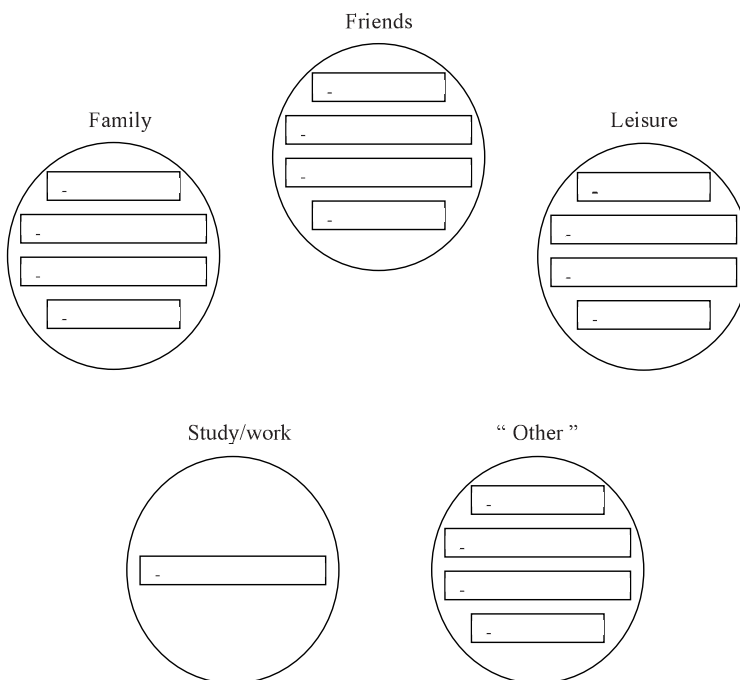conditions in which the expressions were formulated). An index of inter-rater agreement was computed for a random sample of 50 goals. The intraclass correlation coefficient reached the value of .83 ($p < .001$), which indicates a very high inter-rater agreement. Some examples of abstraction level coding are presented in Table 1.

manipulations, this item referred to the educational goal written in the first questionnaire; after the manipulations, it referred to the goal in the second questionnaire.

Absolute importance.

As suggested by Bardi, Lee, Hofmann-Towfigh, and Soutar (2009),

(nine-point Likert-type scale from 1 [*strongly disagree*] to 9 [*strongly agree*]).

Relative importance.

Another of Sideridis's (2001) items asked students if they agree that top priority should be given to their educational goal in a classification of the various things they try to be or to do in their life: "Working towards this goal is the most important thing for me" (nine-point Likert-type scale).

Table 1

Examples of Educational Goals and their Abstraction Level Index

Low level of abstraction[a]: do-goals (code = 0)	Medium level of abstraction[b] (code = 1)	High level of abstraction[c]: be-goals (code = 2)
1. To study at the School of Management.	1. To study something that I love and in which I could be useful later.	1. To be recognized in my job.
2. To attend math classes.	2. To be happy in my job while earning a good living.	2. To be a civil engineer.
3. To study one of the various branches of medicine.	3. To help other people, to be a part of their life.	3. To become an important person.
4. To work hard for the subjects that I love.	4. To be a doctor working abroad for a humanitarian organization.	4. To be totally fulfilled in my job.
5. To develop my language skills.	5. To work hard in a job that allows me to be useful to others.	5. To become an open-minded person.

[a] an expression that relates to doing a certain kind of thing
[b] an expression that mixes characteristics of the low and high levels of abstraction
[c] an expression that relates to being a certain kind of person

Degree of integration.

One item, developed from definitions of the degree of integration (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995), was used to measure goal integration before and after the manipulations: "I see clearly how certain other goals in my life will help me achieve this goal". Before the

we distinguished between absolute and relative importance, and investigated the impact of this distinction in an exploratory way. One item taken from Sideridis (2001) asked students to estimate the importance of their educational goal without any comparison to their other goals: "This goal is extremely important to me"

Absolute commitment.

The same distinction between absolute and relative has been introduced into our measure of commitment. Thirteen items, adapted from Brunstein (1993), and Hollenbeck, Klein, O'Leary, and Wright (1989), asked students to estimate their commitment to their educational goal without any comparison to their other goals ($\alpha = .85$). An exploratory factor analysis showed that the thirteen items loaded on a unique factor. Six of the thirteen items (e.g., "I am strongly committed to pursuing this goal") were used before the manipulations ($\alpha = .76$), and the other seven (e.g., "It wouldn't take much to make me abandon this goal" (reversed item)) were used after it ($\alpha = .79$).

Relative commitment.

Three of the items measuring absolute commitment were also used, in a slightly adapted form, to ask students to estimate their commitment to their

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Scales

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Abstraction level (BM[a])	0.59	0.78	1.00									
2. Abstraction level (AM[b])	0.85	0.86	.28***	1.00								
3. Degree of integration (BM)	3.49	0.94	.01	.03	1.00							
4. Degree of integration (AM)	3.63	0.91	−.03	.04	.47***	1.00						
5. Absolute importance (AM)	7.29	1.66	.05	.07	.16***	.20***	1.00					
6. Relative importance (AM)	5.79	2.07	.06	.08*	.14***	.17***	.57***	1.00				
7. Absolute commitment (BM)	4.04	0.58	.15***	.09*	.32***	.28***	.44***	.29***	1.00			
8. Absolute commitment (AM)	3.91	0.60	.11**	.05	.25***	.25***	.53***	.41***	.62***	1.00		
9. Relative commitment (BM)	3.85	0.90	.09*	.06	.23***	.23***	.28***	.21***	.29***	.33***	1.00	
10. Relative commitment (AM)	3.51	0.94	.07	.08*	.11**	.10**	.34***	.38***	.34***	.47***	.23***	1.00

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

[a] before manipulation[b]
[b] after manipulation

educational goal in comparison to other goals. An exploratory factor analysis showed that the three items loaded on a unique factor. One of these three items ("I am ready to put in more effort into achieving this goal than into achieving my other goals") was used before the manipulations. The other two items (e.g., "I am more determined to pursue other goals than this one" (reversed item)) were used after the manipulations ($\alpha = .71$).

Results

Eight participants had some outliers (+/− 3 standard deviations from the mean) and were excluded from the analyses. The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 2.

Manipulation Checks

Goal abstraction.

A between-participants ANCOVA was conducted to check the effectiveness of the abstraction manipulation on the abstraction level after the manipulation, controlling for its level before the manipulation. More specifically, the two manipulations and their interaction were introduced as independent variables to check if there was only a main effect of the abstraction manipulation, or whether the other manipulation or the interaction had an effect. The results indicate a significant main effect of the abstraction manipulation ($F(1, 678) = 102.90$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .13$), no main effect of the integration manipulation ($F(1, 678) = 0.80$; ns), and no interaction effect ($F(1, 678) = 2.48$; ns). After the manipulation, the goal expression was more abstract in the high level of abstraction condition ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.85$) than in the low level of abstraction condition ($M = 0.55$, $SD = 0.77$). Before the manipulation, the mean in the high level of abstraction condition ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.77$) and that in the low level of abstraction condition ($M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.78$) did not differ ($F(1, 684) = 0.03$; ns). We conducted two additional within-participant ANOVAs to improve our understanding of the abstraction manipulation's effect. In the high level of abstraction condition, the goal expression was more abstract after the

manipulation ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.85$) than before ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.77$) ($F(1, 338) = 120.98$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .26$). However, in the low level of abstraction condition, the goal expression was not significantly less abstract after the manipulation than before ($F(1, 343) = 0.40$; ns). It therefore seems to be easier to lead students to express their educational goal more as an identity to develop, than to lead them to express their goal more as an action to complete. Having said that, the results confirm that the manipulation created two groups significantly different in terms of their abstraction level.

Goal integration.

A between-participants ANCOVA was conducted to check the effectiveness of the integration manipulation on the degree of integration after the manipulation, controlling for its level before the manipulation. Again, the two manipulations and their interaction were introduced as independent variables. The results indicate a significant main effect of the integration manipulation ($F(1, 670) = 4.91$; $p < .05$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$), no main effect of the abstraction manipulation ($F(1, 670) = 0.80$; ns), and no interaction effect ($F(1, 670) = 0.02$; ns). After the manipulation, students in the integrated condition perceived their goal as more integrated ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.92$) than students in the unintegrated condition ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.90$). The two conditions did not differ before the manipulation ($F(1, 678) = 1.21$; ns). We conducted two additional within-participant ANOVAs to improve our understanding of the integration manipulation's effect. Students in the integrated condition perceived their goal as more integrated after the manipulation ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.92$) than before ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.96$) ($F(1, 340) = 20.72$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .06$). However, in the unintegrated condition, the goal was not perceived differently before ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.91$) and after the manipulation ($F(1, 333) = 1.71$; ns). It seems therefore to be easier to increase the perception of a goal as linked to other goals than to decrease this perception. Having said that, the results confirm that the manipulation

created two groups significantly different in terms of their perception of goal integration.

Impact of the Manipulations

Goal commitment.

Two between-participant ANOVAs tested the impact of the manipulations on the absolute and relative goal commitment. The first analysis did not show any main effect of the manipulations on the absolute commitment (manipulation of abstraction: $F(1, 683) = 0.08$; ns; manipulation of integration: $F(1, 683) = 2.51$; ns). Nor was there an interaction effect ($F(1, 683) = 1.38$; ns).

The second ANOVA also showed no main effect of the manipulations on the relative commitment (manipulation of abstraction: $F(1, 676) = 0.01$; ns; manipulation of integration: $F(1, 676) = 0.28$; ns). However there was a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 676) = 4.88$; $p < .05$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$). The relative commitment was highest in condition a ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.92$) and lowest in condition b ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.93$). It was intermediate in conditions c ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.92$) and d ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.99$). The scores of the students in the four conditions did not differ before the manipulations ($F(3, 682) = 1.40$; ns). A simple effects analysis was conducted to look at the effect of each manipulation at individual levels of the other manipulation. This revealed a significant difference between conditions a and b ($F(1, 677) = 3.75$; $p = .05$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$). The interaction effect of the manipulations on the relative commitment is presented in the top part of Figure 3.

Goal importance.

Two between-participant ANOVAs tested the impact of the manipulations on absolute and relative goal importance. The first ANOVA did not show any main effect of the manipulations on the absolute importance (manipulation of abstraction: $F(1, 683) = 0.08$; ns; manipulation of integration: $F(1, 683) = 2.51$; ns); nor did it show an interaction effect ($F(1, 683) = 1.38$; ns).

The second ANOVA also showed no main effect of the manipulations on the relative importance (manipulation of abstraction: $F(1, 681) = 0.33$; ns;

manipulation of integration: $F(1, 681) = 0.04$; *ns*). However it did display a significant interaction effect ($F(1, 681) = 4.98$; $p < .05$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$). The relative importance was the highest in condition *a* ($M = 5.99$, $SD = 2.03$) and the lowest in condition *c* ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 2.07$). It attained intermediate levels in conditions *b* ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 2.15$) and *d* ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 2.02$). The simple effects analysis revealed a significant difference between conditions *a* and *c* ($F(1, 682) = 4.01$; $p < .05$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$). The interaction effect of the manipulations on the relative importance is presented on the bottom part of Figure 3.
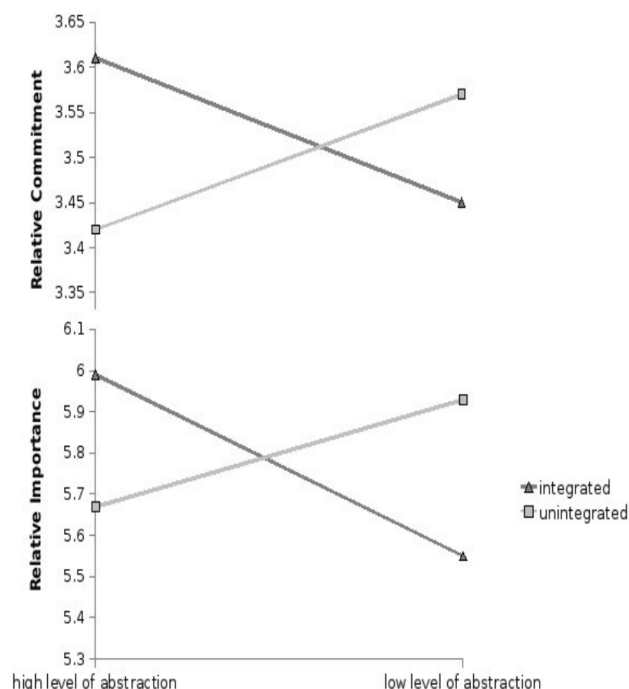
ANCOVA was conducted, with the two manipulations and their interaction as independent variables, the relative importance as a covariate, and the relative commitment as the dependent variable (Muller, Yzerbyt, & Judd, 2008). The impact of the relative importance on the relative commitment, controlling for the impact of the two manipulations, was significant ($F(1, 671) = 107.39$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .14$). Importance and commitment were positively linked ($r = .38$; $p < .001$). The ANCOVA also showed that the impact of the interaction between the manipulations on the relative commitment disappeared ($F(1, 671) = 2.60$; *ns*) once the impact of the relative importance

below, three main conclusions can be drawn: (1) the representation students have of their educational goal can be changed; (2) goal commitment and importance are influenced by goal abstraction and integration; (3) the impact of goal abstraction and integration on goal commitment is mediated by goal importance.

With respect to the first conclusion, the representation students have of their educational goal (in terms of abstraction level and degree of integration) can be changed. However, although it could be made more abstract and more integrated, it could not be made less abstract or less integrated. Why? If it is easier to increase the abstraction level of an educational goal than to decrease it, this is probably due to the low mean level of abstraction before manipulation: most of the educational goals were coded 0 on the scale from 0 to 2. For most of the students in the low level of abstraction condition, it was therefore impossible to decrease their abstraction level further.

It has also been shown that it is easier to increase students' perceptions of the degree to which their goals are integrated, than to decrease them. One explanation for this asymmetrical effect of the integration manipulation may be that the perception of integration is at a higher level of complexity than that of isolation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students who have already attained this level of complexity do not readily return to a less developed perception. Another explanation of this limit could lie in the integration measure. Goal commitment differed in conditions *a* and *b*, although these only varied on the integration dimension. Two explanations for this difference are possible. Either it is just due to an increased degree of integration in condition *a*, or it is due to both an increased degree of integration in condition *a* and a decreased degree of integration in condition *b*. If the second option is correct, then the non-significant effectiveness of the manipulation in the unintegrated condition may be due to the inability of our measure to detect the decrease in integration. This measure should be improved in future research. However, in the present study, the comparison between the four conditions still makes

Fig. 3 The impact of the manipulations on goal commitment and goal importance

Mediational Analysis

Goal importance has been postulated as a mediator of the impact of abstraction and integration on goal commitment. The first two conditions for a mediational model (Baron & Kenny, 1986) were checked by investigating the impact of the manipulations. We found that the interaction between the two manipulations had a significant impact (1) on the relative commitment, and (2) on the relative importance. To complete the test of the mediation, a between-participant

had been taken into account. All four conditions for a full mediation were therefore satisfied.

Discussion

This study was, to the best of our knowledge, a first attempt to empirically test Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions about the hierarchical goal structure, and to experimentally investigate the antecedents of educational goal commitment. Although there are certain limitations, which will be discussed

sense given the significant differences observed in terms of abstraction and integration between the four conditions.

Our second conclusion is that the impact of the manipulations of goal abstraction and integration on goal commitment and importance has been confirmed. Three characteristics of this impact were consistent in the investigations of commitment and importance, which gives them additional weight. First, the manipulations only affected the commitment and importance attached to the educational goal in comparison to other goals. This may be because the relative dimension is more flexible than the absolute dimension (which is relatively stable). Therefore, the external influence of the manipulations was more easily reflected by the relative dimension.

The second consistent result is that only the interaction between the two manipulations had an impact on goal commitment and importance; neither of the manipulations was effective on its own. In other words, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported, but we found an interaction that is exactly in line with Hypothesis 3. As assumed by this hypothesis, if the goal was perceived to be linked to other goals, goal commitment and importance increased when moving from a low to a high level of abstraction. However, if the goal was perceived as unintegrated, goal commitment and importance decreased when moving from a low to a high level of abstraction. If a goal was perceived as integrated, Carver and Scheier's (1998) hypothesis of a positive impact of be-goals is supported. This first part of the interaction is in line with Bandura's (1986) assumption that personal development is best served by combining distal aspirations with proximal self-guidance. However, if a goal is perceived in isolation, the results are more supportive of Locke and Latham's (2002) proposition that do-goals, which are generally more proximal, enhance motivation.

How can we explain the absence of any main effect? This is due to the cross-over interaction we found. The negative impact of abstraction when integration was low was approximately as strong as its positive impact when integration was high. We suggest that

this strong negative impact is due to the extremely low level of integration which students in the unintegrated condition experienced. These students were asked to complete a diagram representing their educational goal as totally isolated from their other goals. The representation to which students in condition *b* were therefore confronted (a be-goal alone, without any link to other goals) gives them no ideas on how to achieve their educational goal. This has a strong negative impact on their commitment. We suggest that, outside such an experimental setting, this totally isolated representation is quite rare. Students at a low degree of integration perceive few links between their educational goal and other goals. However, the few links they do perceive make the focus on a be-goal not as negative as in condition *b*.

The third consistent result is that students reached the highest level of both goal commitment and importance in condition *a*. Moreover, the simple effects analyses revealed this condition as having a significantly higher degree of commitment than condition *b*, and a significantly higher level of importance than condition *c*. In other words, commitment and importance were both significantly higher only if the two conditions were present together: the student was focused on a be-goal and this goal was perceived as linked to other goals in his/her life. This result brings a second support to Bandura's (1986) and Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions.

The participants in condition *d* reached a position just below those in condition *a* on both commitment and importance. The fact that this condition did not differ significantly from condition *a* is in line with Hypothesis 3. However, unlike condition *a*, condition *d* was not significantly different from either conditions *b* or *c*. A difference between conditions *d* and *b* would have brought a second support to Locke and Latham's (2002) assumption. The absence of a significant difference between it and the other conditions makes the position of condition *d* quite difficult to explain. Future research should include control conditions in a 3 (goal abstraction: high – low – control) x 3 (goal integration: integrated –

unintegrated – control) experimental design. This would reveal more about the specific impact of each condition on goal commitment and importance.

The main difference between the results on goal commitment and those on goal importance concerns the classification of conditions *b* and *c*. Based on Hypothesis 3, these conditions are assumed to be at a significantly lower level of goal commitment and importance than conditions *a* or *d*. However, only condition *b* was at a significantly lower level of commitment than condition *a*, and only condition *c* was at a significantly lower level of importance than condition *a*. The negative impact, observed in condition *b*, of a focus on an isolated be-goal on goal commitment is in line with Hypothesis 3. This difference between conditions *a* (an abstract goal integrated in a hierarchical structure of abstract and concrete goals) and *b* (an abstract goal isolated from other goals) can be viewed as an illustration of the distinction between reality-based goals and empty dreams and fantasies (Miller & Brickman, 2004). The educational goal in condition *b* appeared too far off and isolated to develop a high commitment to its achievement. However, students in condition *b* did not attach significantly less importance to their goal as postulated by Hypothesis 3. Although it is difficult for students to commit to an isolated be-goal, they do not necessarily attach less importance to this dream than to a reality-based goal.

The importance of the link to concrete goals or subgoals has been demonstrated for goal commitment. However, this conclusion should not overshadow the importance of the be-goals to which these subgoals are anchored (Bandura, 1986; Miller & Brickman, 2004). Our results show that the impact of the manipulations on importance in condition *c* was significantly less good than in condition *a*. This negative impact of an integrated do-goal on goal importance is in line with Hypothesis 3. It is difficult for students to attach a lot of importance to a concrete goal, expressed as an action to undertake. This is more specifically true when this do-goal is perceived as integrated with other goals. Indeed, in this case, the relative importance of the

goal is significantly lower because the concrete goal appears at the very bottom of a hierarchy and is only seen as a tool to reach other goals. However, students are not significantly less committed to this integrated do-goal as hypothesized by Hypothesis 3. The perception that working on this concrete goal can contribute to the attainment of more abstract goals probably helps them to maintain this commitment.

To sum up, our results offer strong support to Hypothesis 3. The cross-over interactions are in line with this hypothesis, and do not support the main effects we postulated. Additional support for Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions was provided by the simple effects analyses.

Our final conclusion concerns the role of goal importance within the impact of goal abstraction and integration on goal commitment. We showed that the higher the relative importance of a goal, the greater the relative commitment to that goal. This result supports the hypothesis that goal importance is a direct antecedent of goal commitment, which was mainly based on the expectancy-value model (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Moreover, the mediating role of the relative importance of the goal is supported. The interactive impact of abstraction and integration on relative commitment is completely mediated by the relative importance. The representation of a goal within the hierarchical goal structure influences its relative importance, and therefore, indirectly, the relative commitment to that goal.

Three limitations to the present study should be noted. First, goal integration and goal importance were both single-item measures. However, these measures were not aimed at investigating the constructs of integration and importance in all their complexity. Their aim was to analyze the change of the four experimental conditions in terms of (some aspects of) integration and importance. However, the measures do need further validation.

Second, although the impact of our manipulations has been demonstrated, their effect sizes were quite small. This was expected, given that these manipulations were performed during one short period of time. The aim of our study was to investigate the causality of the link between goal commitment and its possible antecedents, not to develop a program to influence commitment in the long run. However, it would be interesting to develop an intervention study with this aim.

Third, our final dependent variable, goal commitment, was measured as an intention and not as a behavior. This study provided a snapshot of students' perceptions of and motivations towards their educational goal at the end of high school, before they had to choose their program of study and to commit to this choice by registering, attending courses, and taking examinations. The antecedents identified in this study are those of the students' intentions to commit to their goal. Although previous research has already shown a link between educational goal commitment and achievement-related behaviors (e.g., Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007), our results need to be completed by an investigation of the students' behavioral commitment to their goal after entry to college.

Because our study breaks new ground in the explanation of educational goal commitment, its practical implications remain tentative. Our results give rise to the development of a tool for counseling interventions. This tool would be an empty diagram representing the hierarchical goal structure (like Figure 1). The first purpose of such a tool could be to increase students' awareness of their own representation of their educational goal, by asking them to complete the diagram with their goals. This increased awareness of their own representation and its potential consequences on their commitment and on goal actualization may allow them to control these consequences better. A second aim of the tool could be to guide students in the development of their hierarchical goal structure. People vary in their knowledge of the paths they can take to achieve their long-term goals (Miller & Brickman, 2004). This tool could be a useful way of providing some information about possible routes between goals and subgoals, while leaving students free to draw their own diagram of their relevant goals and the paths between them.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

CINDY BLACKSTOCK

Dr. Cindy Blackstock is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and Associate Professor at the University of Alberta. Her key interests include exploring and addressing the causes of disadvantage for Aboriginal children.

ROXANNE SAWATZKY

Roxanne Sawatzky is the President and Founder of Empowering Change, a leading organization empowering innovative service providers to enhance interactions with multi-barriered individuals.

DEBBIE MUIR

Debbie Muir is one of Canada's greatest coaches, is an internationally recognized leader, and continues to be a person of influence within the Canadian sport system. Debbie supports coaches and leaders in creating the best possible environment for world-class results to happen.

MARK TEWKSBURY

Mark Tewksbury is the star athlete who burst out of the water at the Barcelona Olympics, an Olympic Champion with gold, silver and bronze medals and a cover appearance on *Time* magazine. Mark was the Chef de Mission for the 2012 Canadian Olympic team competing in London.

International Students' Views of Transition to Employment and Immigration

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Abstract

This study explored international students' views and experiences of transitioning from school to employment with the goal of permanent immigration. A semi-structured interview with critical incidents was used to assess the career transition experiences of 14 graduate international students from university to employment and permanent immigration to Canada. Data were analyzed using a constant comparison method and critical incident protocol. Despite the fact that most students had not obtained a job after completing their educational programs, the majority felt as though the decision to remain in Canada to work and eventually immigrate was a good one. Students' expectations about better job prospects were unmet while their expectations about an enhanced quality of life in Canada were met. Students recommended that Canadian employers be more open-minded about hiring people with international experience and see the benefits of a diverse workforce. The international students hoped that those employed in career services will help future students to build networks and meet prospective employers. Students advised future international students to educate themselves about Canadian culture, how Canadians interact, and the Canadian work environment. Implications for career services and career counselling are discussed.

Canada's immigration policies are linked to our country's position in the new global economy that is characterized by knowledge, information, and technology (Chen, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2005). Immigration policy now permits international students to work in Canada while they are students and for three years post-graduation. These changes to employment policies were made to increase the qualifications of international students for immigration under the Canadian Experience Class (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2008). International students have specific skills and assets that make them preferred immigrants for the labour force (Hawthorne, 2006; Industry Canada, 2002). They bring experience and contacts from their home countries coupled with the skills that they acquire through their Canadian education.

Minimal research is available about the career development experiences of international students (Arthur, 2007). Available literature has typically focused on their adjustment issues, or preparation for re-entry to the home country, with few sources to guide a comprehensive view of international students' career development (e.g., Arthur, 2003a, 2007; Leung, 2007; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005; Shen & Herr, 2004, Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Policy changes that encourage international students to work in the host country where they study open up the scope of options. Enhanced opportunities to enter the Canadian labour force are connected to broader decisions about whether to gain experience and return home, or to pursue permanent immigration. International students face decisions that are more complex than where to work; their career decision-making includes deliberation about factors in both home and host cultures, making lifestyle choices, and reflection about a preferred future (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). It is timely for career services personnel and career counsellors to consider the influences on international students' career decision-making about pursuing employment and permanent immigration to Canada.

The purpose of this study is to investigate international students' transition experiences from university to employment and permanent immigration. First, a brief literature review is provided to expand the rationale for examining the career development of international students. Second, the approach taken to documenting international students' experiences is outlined. Third, the results of this study are described, including exemplars from interviews with international students. Finally, the discussion addresses considerations for future research and practices to support international students who decide to pursue the option of staying in Canada.

International Students And Desirable Skilled Workers

In 2009, Canadian universities were host to more than 178,000 international students (FAITC, 2009). Canadian universities attract international students from more than 200 countries; the top 10 source countries are China, the United States, France, India, South Korea, Iran, Japan, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Pakistan. At the institutional level, international students bring financial benefits and promote intercultural learning. International students pay substantially higher tuition fees than local students, up to four times more than local students, and supply a revenue stream for budgets in higher education. It is estimated that international students contribute $6.5 billion to Canada's economy annually (AUCC, 2010). As well, international students strengthen an institution's culturally and intellectually diverse learning environment. International students also enhance contacts for future recruitment and business contacts (Arthur, 2003b; Francis, 1993; Knight, 1994). The prospect of permanent migration to a foreign country is

used as a marketing strategy to recruit additional international students. For individuals born in war-torn or impoverished countries, this is a major incentive (Ziguras & Law, 2006). Such prospects have attracted many students to choose Canadian institutions to pursue their academic and broader career goals.

From a global perspective, international students are considered attractive migrants for several key reasons (Ziguras & Law, 2006). In most economically developed societies, the birth rate is declining and the population is aging, creating opportunities for young, skilled workers to fill vacated positions. In filling such positions, international students increase a country's pool of highly skilled workers, thereby supporting economic development. International students bring expertise regarding labour practices and customs from their home countries and, as a result of their education in the host country, acquire valuable local experience (Ziguras & Law, 2006). International students who have been educated at local institutions may be more desirable to employers than those who have a foreign education but lack local experience.

Increased efforts to recruit international students and changes in Canadian immigration policy have implications for international students' immediate and long-term career decisions. Some international students may endeavour to study abroad with the intention of returning to their home countries with marketable skill sets. Other students may be set on remaining in the host country to gain valuable foreign work experience, build international relationships, or immerse themselves in the host culture and language. Permanent immigration may be the long-term goal of some international students who often have a plethora of career- and/or familial-related motives for this decision (Arthur, 2007).

As students are approaching the end of their educational programs career-related issues may surface that pivot around their decision to return home, their intention to gain additional experience in Canada prior to returning home, or their plans to gain additional work experience and pursue permanent immigration. As previously mentioned, some international students decide to re-turn home after the completion of their studies. These students may seek assistance with career services such as job search approaches and strategies for transferring their educational experiences to their home countries (Shen & Herr, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Other students will investigate employment opportunities in the host country. For some students, the motive to secure employment in Canada is to enhance their expertise and credentials so as to be considered marketable employees upon their return to their home countries (Arthur, 2007). The current study is concerned with the experiences of international students who actively seek employment experience for the purpose of pursuing permanent immigration to Canada.

The Current Study

The aim of the current study was to build on our knowledge of the transition and employment experiences of international students who remain in Canada after completing their educational programs. More specifically, the study examined how international students' general and career expectations were met as well as how the job search and acquisition of employment unfolded. As Canadian immigration policies change in ways that create expanding options for international students, it is important to understand how they navigate such changes. The primary research question addressed in this study was the following: How do international students studying in Canada view the transitions from student to employee and/or immigrant? Three secondary questions were addressed, 1) How were students' expectations about better job prospects and enhanced quality of life in Canada met or unmet?; 2) How were students' immigration decisions influenced by their experiences to date; and, 3) What recommendations would international students make for Canadian employers, those employed in career services, and future international students?

Method
Participants

The participants in this study were students previously recruited for a study on the topic of influences on the career development of international students. Participants were 14 undergraduate and graduate international students at a large Western Canadian university. Eleven were men and the ages of the students ranged from 22 to 38 years, with an average of 28.7 (SD =4.64). Students came from the following countries: China (6), Mexico (2), India (2), Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Iran, and Taiwan. Length of time studying in Canada ranged from 0.5-7 years, with an average of 3.01 (SD =1.82). Five of the 16 participants were married and four reported having a partner.

Procedure

This study involved follow-up interviews with international students who were initially interviewed in the last semester of their university program. Participants were initially recruited from the institution's Centre for International Students and Study Abroad (CISSA) during their final year of academic studies. Any international student who subscribed to the CISSA listserv was contacted via e-mail. The participants were recruited from the institution's Centre for International Students during their final year of academic studies. Prospective participants were contacted from the Centre via a general message sent out to all international students on their e-mail list-serve. This e-mail included information about the purpose of the study and the compensation for participation. Students were asked to arrange a time with the second author to meet and be interviewed for up to 1 hour. A total of 26 responses were received, 19 of whom were originally interviewed due to budgetary considerations.

In the current study, phase two, all of original participants were presumed to have completed their educational programs and thus were contacted for a follow-up interview. The second author contacted each participant via e-mail and arranged a time for the interview to be conducted over Skype, a software application that allows video conference calls to be made over the internet and recorded. Sixteen of the 19 international students agreed to be interviewed for a second time, which was approximately 6 months after the first interview. Of

these 16 students, just two were undergraduate students. Due to the potentially differing career goals of undergraduate and graduate students, and this disproportionate ratio, these two students were excluded from the study. As a result, a total of fourteen graduate student interviews were included in the analysis and results. Each interview was audio recorded via the Skype software. In both phases of the study, each student was compensated $30 for his or her time. Permission for both phases of the study was obtained from the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the university where the research was conducted.

The Interview Process

A semi-structured interview was the method of inquiry in this study. This interview involved fourteen open-ended questions as well as inviting participants to offer a descriptive critical incident (CI). The CI related to participants' decisions to pursue immigration to Canada. The choice of using this qualitative methodology is compatible with the need to understand process issues in career development (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). The Critical Incident Technique is derived from the case study method and early work of Flanagan (1954). It has been used in research on the experience of cross-cultural transitions (e.g., Arthur, 2001; Pedersen, 1995), and in career development research (e.g., Amundson, Borgen, Jordan, & Erlebach, 2004; Arthur, Collins, McMahon, & Marshall, 2009). Critical incidents offer snapshots of participants' experiences as they recall situations that stand out for them and that are meaningful in relation to the topic of inquiry. The interview questions, found in the Appendix, were posed in English by the second author. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. As well, the second author discussed the interview with each participant after the fourteen questions had been asked. Participants were invited to add any other information they felt contributed to their experiences as international students. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist, who had signed an oath of confidentiality regarding use of interview material.

The main prompt for the CI, that encouraged participants to choose a unique, outstanding experience, was: Give an example of a situation (i.e., an important event, something that happened, or something that you learned, any situation that you feel was important for you) that helped you to decide to pursue employment/immigration to Canada. The following open-ended questions were also posed to provide some structured parameters for the CI and to encourage participants to elaborate on their descriptions.

1. What were you doing/thinking/feeling?
2. What was your role in this situation?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What stands out for you about this situation?
5. What was going well for you in this situation?
6. What difficulties were you experiencing in this situation?
7. What did you learn from this situation?
8. How do you see this situation as related to your plans and decision-making to work in Canada and/or immigrate to Canada?

Data Analysis

The data collected from the fourteen open-ended interview questions were analyzed using a constant comparison method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1981) and frequency analysis. The second author started by reading each participant's answers in full; she then created a series of tables to index the frequency of participants' responses to the 14 questions. She compared participants' answers, noting commonalities in language such that some answers could be considered the same. For instance, question ten was "Do you plan on immigrating to Canada when your post-graduation work permit expires? Why or why not?" Those who answered "Yes" to this question provided reasons such as "better life than home country" and "social benefits". These answers were considered together and termed "enhanced quality of life".

The approach to analyzing the critical incidents was the same as reported

for the first phase of the study (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). To recap, the procedures from Flanagan's (1954) and Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, and Maglio's (2005) prescribed protocol were followed. The focus of the analysis was placed on how the data in the study could inform career counsellors and campus support services of international students' views of their transitions and experiences from students to employees and immigrants to Canada. The second author read through the transcribed critical incidents twice, highlighting general factors that related to the purpose of the study. Constant comparison was used to group similar incidents together and code the data into themes. A second coder (i.e., the first author) reviewed the emerging themes in relation to portions of each transcript, to guard against coding drift. Any discrepancies about data coding were negotiated until consensus was reached. Two additional steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first author examined 25% of the CIs to establish the level of agreement between what the second author thought was a critical incident and what she thought was a critical incident. In order for a theme to be considered valid, critical incidents from a minimum of 25% of participants had to relate to that theme.

Results

Some of the outcomes of this study, including employment status, difficulties in transitioning, expectations, and desire to immigrate at the time of the interviews have been summarized in Table 1. The results from the open-ended interview questions are presented next, followed by the critical incidents. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of participants. Selected quotes from participants are offered to illustrate key influences on international students' transition experiences. To recap, the interviews were deliberately scheduled approximately 6 months from the end of the previous academic semester to capture students' experiences with securing employment and how they viewed their prospects of life in Canada.

Table 1

Summary of Employment Transitions, Expectations and Desire to Immigrate

Participant	Employed? (Y/N)	Difficulties in transitioning to work	Career ↔ Life expectations: M= met U= unmet N= neither		Desire to immigrate? Y= yes N= no U= unsure	Recommendations for Canadian employers:
			Career	Life		
1	Y	Discomfort in the Canadian work environment	N	M	Y	Do not discriminate
2	N	Finding or retaining a job	M	M	Y	Recognize skills
3	N	Lack of daily structure	U	U	U	Appreciate the acculturation process
4	Y	N/A	M	M	Y	Do not discriminate
5	N	Discomfort in the Canadian work environment	U	M	Y	Recognize international experience
6	N	N/A	U	M	U	Do not discriminate
7	N	Less autonomy	U	N	U	Recognize skills
8	N	N/A	M	M	Y	Recognize international experience
9	Y	N/A	N	M	Y	Appreciate unfamiliarity with workplace
10	N	Increased responsibility	U	M	Y	Do not discriminate
11	N	Lack of hands on skills	N	M	Y	Appreciate logistical constraints
12	Y	Lack of daily structure	U	M	Y	Do not discriminate
13	N	Lack of Canadian work experience	U	M	Y	Recognize skills
14	N	Finding or retaining a job	M	N	Y	Recognize international experience

Employment Status

Of the 14 participants, 28% (four) had secured a job since graduating, two were employed full-time and two were employed part-time. Forty-three percent (six) of participants reported being unable to secure a job and 28% (four) had not yet completed their educational programs. Of the four participants who had obtained employment, two had a job that related to their field of study. When asked if this job was what he or she had expected to be doing, one of the four employed participants indicated that this was his or her expected job. Those who had been unable to secure employment were asked what they had been doing to obtain employment. Most (six) had reviewed job web sites; others had consulted with mentors or those in field (three), or had prepared their resumes and covering letters (two).

Transitions

The majority of participants (seven) believed that a lack of experience was the most difficult aspect of the job search. As well, not having Canadian citizenship or permanent residency (PR) status (two), and a lack of connections or network (two) made this process difficult. When asked to describe the most difficult aspect of the new workplace, those who had secured a job believed that language barriers (1), instability in funding in the non-profit sector (1), the workplace culture (1), and insecurity about skills or lack of skills (1) were problematic. In the words of W. (age 27) *"I haven't done such work before and then, I think I'm lacking some of the skills you know."* D. (age 38) stated *"If I have to speak online there are some problems for me because sometimes they speak too fast and I can't understand. And sometimes I have serious accent and they don't understand me."*

Participants were asked to describe the difficulties in transitioning from students to employees or applicants. Difficulties included the necessity of finding or retaining a job (2), a lack of daily structure compared to student life (for applicants; 2), and an uncertainty about (or discomfort in) the Canadian work environment (2). In the words of C. (age 22), *"But when I graduate, you finally find that you have to depend on yourself. You cannot lose your job, otherwise you cannot survive."* Another participant, W. age 27, stated how the lack of structure in the workplace was a challenge.

"Well, I think the major thing is that when you were a student, you kind of were being assigned work once in a while by your professor. And there is a deadline and it's very clear what the deadline is, but now when I become an employee, I have to sometimes run different projects by myself and I have to make a very clear guideline or schedule for myself in the aspect of how to organize the whole project or the whole task."

Participants believed diversified, well advertised career fairs (3) and having a network (2) would have been helpful during the job search. As well, having Canadian experience or an internship (2) would have been helpful. One participant noted *"Even though Canada is kind of an immigrant country, but I think it's not always easy to immigrate or work as a foreigner and support ourselves"* (N., age 27).

Expectations

Participants were asked about their expectations and how they had shifted over the course of the progression from student to job applicant or employee. When asked at this point in time if they think remaining in Canada was a good decision for themselves and their families, 64% (11) said yes, 35% (5) were unsure, and 0% said no. Those who answered yes believed that Canada offered a better quality of life (3), cited familial reasons (2), were attracted by career incentives (1), or had made an extensive investment in Canada. According to A. (age 25), *"In India, if the person goes for work, he goes in the morning at eight o'clock and he comes back the next day at nine o'clock. Here it's simpler. If I work, then you can give more to your family. This is the biggest thing; you have time for your family and for yourself."* Those who were unsure stated that there was an economic recession in Canada (2), that there were ample jobs in the home country (1), this decision depended on job they would obtain (1), and that hard work is necessary anywhere (1).

Fifty percent (7) of participants believed that their expectations about better job prospects or enhanced opportunities in Canada were unmet, 28% (4) believed they were met and 21% (3) believed they were both met

and unmet. Those who believed their expectations were unmet stated that jobs related to their major were scarce, there was a greater chance of promotion at home, their perception of opportunities had changed, or that there was currently an economic recession. Those who believed their expectations were met because of the friendly people (1), good salaries (1), or by the fact that friends had gotten jobs (1). According to W. (age 27), whose expectations were unmet, *"While I was looking for a job and I clearly understand what I am capable of doing, then I changed my expectation. I kind of lowered my expectations"*.

Regarding the quality of life in Canada, participants were asked similar questions. When asked if their expectations about an enhanced quality of life in Canada were met or not met, 78% (11) stated they were met, while 14% (2) believed they were both met and unmet, and 4% (1) believed they were unmet. Those who believed they were met stated reasons such as the existence of work-life balance (3) and personal freedom (1). One participant noted *"I had a good life in Iran. But if I want to compare, I had a bigger house, I had a better car. But these are just, like material things, right? Here in Canada we have more peace of mind. You don't worry much about your daily life; basically it is calm and friendly"* (A., 36). As stated by another participant, L. (age 26), *"We decide to stay because of the lifestyle and the environment and not necessarily the job opportunities. Because actually there are a lot of opportunities in our home country, which is China."* Those who believed they were both met and unmet stated that it depended on their permanent residency status (1) or were unsure how to compare their current expectations to their previous ones (1).

Immigration Plans

Participants were asked about their current plans for immigration to Canada. The majority of participants, 78% (11), planned to immigrate to Canada when their 3year post-graduation work permit expired. Reasons for immigrating included an enhanced quality of life (4), career incentives (3), the

possibility of becoming a permanent resident (4), the freedom provided to move between countries (3), and familial incentives (3). In the words of H. (age 27), *"I'm looking for a safe, stable life."* Twenty-one percent (3) were unsure if they would immigrate, for these students the decision depended on the job market.

When asked if their decisions to immigrate had been strengthened or weakened by their work (or job search) experiences to date, 42% (6) reported that their decisions had been strengthened. Reasons included: having secured a job, it made sense given one's career goals, and familial incentives. Thirty-one percent (5) stated that it neither strengthened nor weakened their decision. According to B. (age 29), *"I don't think it's a factor because even when I am not an immigrant right now, I still want to work in Canada for a while."* Twenty-one % of participants (3) believe their decision to immigrate to Canada had been weakened. Reasons for weakening in decisions included dependence on job prospects and permanent residency status.

Critical Incidents

Participants were asked to give an example of a situation (i.e., an important event, or something that they learned, etc.) that helped them to decide to pursue employment/immigration to Canada. The second author constructed two themes that described the influences on these international students' intentions to pursue employment and/or immigration to Canada post-graduation. The first theme was *career/education* the second was *lifestyle/familial*.

The career/education theme described 64% (9) of participants' critical events and included perceived and realized career opportunities, viewing others' career-related successes, substantial educational investment, and supportive faculty. In the words of R. (age 33), witnessing others' success motivates one to pursue personal goals.

Some classmates have already found a job and then they someone encourage you to keep going because like that's the hardest part somehow. Once you're doing something

that you like, then you're more satisfied with the income that you might have. I mean everything starts to get better."

Another participant spoke of her educational investment as a critical influence.

… I guess one of my main reasons why I would want to work here is because like ever since I've been studying, like I've been moving my savings for like graduation and all those things. I would want to work here and earn Canadian dollars. Because if I go back to India and like the currency is entirely different, so I would rather kind of make up for all the investments that I have put in the education while I was in Canada. So it just makes sense for me to work here" (J., age 26).

Encouragement and support from academic advisors, such as supervisors was meaningful, as noted by J. (age 27).

I would say my professor helped me a lot, so if would pick one significant event, I would say he took me to two class conferences. And I see a lot of things in these conferences and met a lot of people. And I feel very confident after those conferences because I feel that I could learn a lot and I could meet a lot of people in this environment and I could contribute a lot to the society.

This example illustrates how assistance to make initial contacts and begin the network process enhances confidence for pursuing career goals.

The *lifestyle/familial* theme encapsulated 36% (5) of critical incidents in participants' decisions to stay. A major influence was the high quality of life offered in Canada compared to participants' home countries. According to A. (age 25), *"What I think… is the quality life between India and here. Like here, medium class or low class person can enjoy the things that a high class person can in India. And I am living here like a high class person can live in India."*

Some participants noted the possibility of achieving a work-life balance as critical in their decision, while others noted how their relationships with Canadians was strongly related to their views of lifestyles. *"I think people always—-the friends I know and the life in Canada overall"* (L., age 26). The possibility of sponsoring one's family was critical in M.'s (age 24) decision.

> *Being in school, you can apply for many scholarships and other stuff. So if you are a landed immigrant and another thing is that once you become the permanent resident, it only takes three years to get the citizenship because you have already spent one year in the school, so it gets counted. That's one thing. Another thing is that you can sponsor your family if you are a PR. So I can sponsor my parents, so that they can come here and stay with me."*

These examples show how relationships in both home and host cultures are key influences for international students as they consider lifestyles afforded in their home countries and cultures in comparison to Canada.

Recommendations

Based on their experiences, participants were asked to provide some recommendations for Canadian employers, campus support services, and incoming international students. A summary of the recommendations if found in Table 2.

When asked what they could tell Canadian employers anything, the majority of participants (5) advised these individuals to refrain from discriminating against students' international status, lack of citizenship, or poor English proficiency. As well students suggested employers get to know international students' skills and qualifications (3) and to recognize that international experience is a valuable asset (3). According to W. (age 27) stated *"I would say for the Canadian employers well, be more open-minded and be more inclusive of the diversity of the employees in your company or organization."* B. (age 36) noted, "*Some employers really don't know what it's like to immigrate or work*

in a different country...but some people, if they have experience working outside of Canada or different places or even immigrated here, they usually are more sympathetic to me."

When it came to those employed in campus support services, participants recommended that these personnel help students build networks and meet prospective employers (5). *"So to arrange the opportunity to let students know the employers and to know who they are going to work for"* (J., 27). This is explained by another student *"Canadian students here have a nice network of family and friends. For us it's totally different. We have a network, but we left it at home"* (A., 36). As well participants noted a lack of information specifically for graduate students (4) and suggested that personal help students get pre-graduation work experience and/or internships (4). This is exemplified by B.'s (age 29) comment: *"They don't really have some program to help graduate students to find an internship or a volunteer job or something*

like that." In J.'s (age 26) statement, there is also a plea for services that help international students to transition into the labour market:

> *I think for graduate students especially, because most of them are international students and most are graduating with PhDs or Masters. I find because the undergraduates are mostly Canadians. Graduates as compared to undergraduates have more difficulty in finding a job because they are not really familiar with how to find a job in a different country and those things. So I would suggest that the Career Center should like have some special grants or something, a special department to look after the graduate students. Yeah, and connect them to the employers.*

Finally, participants were asked to make recommendations to other international students wishing to stay in

Table 2

Recommendations for Employers, Student Services, and Incoming International Students

Participant	Recommendations for Canadian employers:	Recommendations for campus support services:	Recommendations for incoming international students:
1	Do not discriminate	Info specifically for graduate students	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment
2	Recognize skills	Help students build networks, meet prospective employers	Proficiency in English or French
3	Appreciate the acculturation process	Info specifically for graduate students	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment; Pre-graduation job research
4	Do not discriminate	Greater promotion of services	Pre-graduation job research ; Proficiency in English or French; Pre-graduation part-time employment
5	Recognize international experience	Help students get pre-graduation work experience/internships; Continued support post-graduation	Proficiency in English or French; Be confident in interviews; Do not get discouraged regarding jobs
6	Do not discriminate	Help students build networks, meet prospective employers	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment; Pre-graduation job research
7	Recognize skills	Info specifically for graduate students	Pre-graduation networking, ask those in the field; Proficiency in English or French
8	Recognize international experience	Help students build networks, meet prospective employers	Pre-graduation job research; Pre-graduation networking, ask those in the field
9	Appreciate unfamiliarity with workplace	Help students get pre-graduation work experience/internships	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment
10	Do not discriminate	Info specifically for graduate students; Do not be fearful of giving advice re work policies	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment
11	Appreciate logistical constraints	Help students build networks, meet prospective employers; information on permanent residency status	Pre-graduation job research; Pre-graduation networking, ask those in the field; Do not get discouraged regarding jobs
12	Do not discriminate	Do not just direct students to websites	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment; Pre-graduation job research
13	Recognize skills	Help students build networks, meet prospective employers	Educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, Canadian work environment; Pre-graduation networking, ask those in the field
14	Recognize international experience	Help students get pre-graduation work experience/internships	Pre-graduation job research; Do not get discouraged regarding jobs

Canada post-graduation. First and foremost, participants advised potential international students to educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, and the Canadian work environment (6). As well pre-graduation job research was noted as a very important task (5) as was pre-graduation networking with those individuals in the students' fields (6). J. (age 27) advised future international students to be proactive about ways to make the transition to working in Canada.

> I would tell them, of course, the official language is English and French, so at least they have to be very fluent in either English or French. If they could, they could learn the other language as well, because it will be very helpful. And also, for the students, they have to know more about the culture and the working culture in the companies. Because it's a little bit different from the culture in China or in India or other countries. So yeah, they have to do all those researches by themselves to fit in the environment."

The emphasis in this recommendation for incoming international students is to be proactive about learning about Canadian culture, enhance language skills, and to become informed as much as possible prior to arriving to Canada.

Discussion

The choice to remain in a foreign country after completing one's studies is an exciting prospect, yet it is a decision that pivots around employment prospects. The international students in this study were willing to embrace the risks associated with remaining in Canada following their degree completion to forward important career, lifestyle, and familial objectives. The primary incentives for studying abroad are usually related to academic and career goals (Arthur, 2007) and the students in this study noted key struggles not only in finding a job but in showcasing themselves to potential employers. Most of the international students interviewed in this study were unable to secure stable employment within six

months after completing their educational programs. Students believed that a key piece missing from their repertoire of skills was work experience. This finding is reflected in the literature; it has been demonstrated that international students have relatively greater needs for work experiences than job exploration or career planning (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Students believed that the existence of a network would be helpful in obtaining employment. Students felt as though they were at a disadvantage compared to their Canadian counterparts when it came to knowing about or securing coveted positions. Programming through university career services and international students' centers might look at addressing this concern by better connecting students with potential employers in their communities. As well, previous research has indicated that relevant work experience, in the form of internships or teaching assistantships, enhances students' career foundations, helping them to establish a network (Shen & Herr, 2004).

Students noted the most difficult aspect of transitioning from a student to a (potential) employee was the increased level of responsibility. This finding may be of interest to career counsellors in preparing students for the realities of the work world prior to degree completion. It appears as though the structure and consistency of student life was not paralleled in students' roles as potential employees and employees. This transition might be particularly difficult for international students from East Asian cultures who are accustomed to hierarchical relationships and may be uncomfortable questioning an authority figure or clarifying their role in a new workplace (Hong & Domokos-Cheng, 2000). Counsellors might adopt a psycho-educational approach for helping students to understand aspects of the Canadian workplace. Although expectations will vary according to each occupational environment, counsellors can help students understand general expectations and how roles will be different as an employee compared to a student.

Students were secure in their decisions to remain in Canada and to eventually immigrate. Further, these decisions were strengthened by their ex-

periences of living and studying in Canada. This outcome speaks to students' optimism and desire to continue to pursue long-term career goals despite barriers and challenges. This is reflected in the critical incidents, many of which were centered on education/career. Students were willing to withstand immediate difficulties in the face of long-term academic or vocational interests. A comparatively higher quality of life was critical to students- this was reflected in both the critical incidents and the interview responses. Perhaps this incentive combined with the possibility of enhanced career opportunities strengthened students' decisions to remain in Canada after completing their educational programs. This finding has been reflected in the literature, as the international students in Shen and Herr's (2004) study viewed the prospect of a better living and working environment in the United States as an incentive to remain in that country.

Students provided a series of recommendations for Canadian employers, personnel in career services, and international students interested in studying in Canada. These valuable suggestions can be examined and implemented in several domains. There must be a stronger connection and increased communication between Canadian universities and Canadian employers. In the views of the participants in this study, Canadian employers are somewhat closed to the prospect of hiring international students and may be discouraged by students' accents and lack of Canadian citizenship. As well, students believed employers do not understand or appreciate their international experience. If taken in a stronger light, the experiences of some international students in this study was that employers preferred to hire only Canadian students and were negatively biased against hiring international students. This raises questions about the responsibility of the institutions that recruit international students to ensure that students looking to remain in Canada receive a fair chance of obtaining sustainable employment. University-based personnel, including academic staff and career services staff have roles to play in educating Canadian employers about what international students can offer as potential employ-

ees. Brochures, websites, or presentations may be used to highlight, for instance, students' multilingual skills, knowledge of foreign economies and market trends, or their familiarity and comfort working with individuals from diverse cultural groups. Furthermore, an emphasis must be placed on the long-term benefits of hiring an individual with multi-national experience. Such benefits include establishing and strengthening global relationships and enhancing business communication through students' global perspectives and multilingualism.

International students can be an integral part of the burgeoning relationship between Canadian universities and Canadian employers. The international students in this study were keen to meet prospective employers, partake in internships, and obtain pre-graduation work experience. Students can participate in creating and updating the resources presented to Canadian employers. They can create profiles on promotional websites and speak during presentations about their experiences and marketable skills. This is an opportunity for students to become more creative and promote their international and local experience in an interesting and relevant way to employers. As well, it might be helpful for employers to have a standard means of evaluating students at the end of their work terms and internships. This will provide students with constructive, practical feedback to prepare for the job acquisition process.

Finally, the students in this study advised international students planning on studying in Canada to integrate into the Canadian culture and conduct pre-graduation research on potential job opportunities. This advice to incoming international students might be most effectively distributed through presentations given by experienced international students during student orientation. As well, counsellors assisting international students can examine students' bicultural realities to understand how clients internalize and adhere to the Canadian culture in light of their own cultural identities and values (Miller, 2007; Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2000). Counsellors may use a cultural formation approach to explore the culturally situated self and

how transitions impact career choice and development (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009).

Considerations for Future Research

This study provided many insights into international students' views and experiences of transitioning from full-time university students to potential employees and immigrants. The results provide a foundation from which others may explore how the international students at their institutions are adjusting to the transition from students to potential employees or immigrants.

One major limitation in this study was its small sample size. The results of interviews with fourteen international students representing eight countries were explored in this study. This is a relatively small number compared to the total number of international students studying at the institution where the study was conducted. Further, the participant pool consisted largely of graduate students, most of whom were studying engineering or science. The danger in using a small participant group is that the codes and themes generated may not necessarily speak to the diversity of the student population. The participants in the study were volunteers who had a particular interest in the topic of inquiry.

Further investigation is warranted to more fully explore international students' experiences of transition. First and foremost, a study of a larger scale is warranted. A multi-institutional study that captures the experiences of a large number of international students from a variety of countries would provide valuable information on the transition issues these students encounter in their endeavours to work and immigrate to Canada. The outcomes of such inquiry could be used to inform institutional policies and services to support international students' career development in the transition from school to work.

As well, it would be useful to compare international students' perceptions to those held by Canadian employers. The students in this study, for instance, believed that Canadian employers were somewhat closed to hiring international students. It would be worth examining if, in fact, international students are at a

disadvantage or advantage compared to their Canadian counterparts in terms of their employability, and particularly the value placed on international experience by employers. This information would help researchers target the actual barriers and facilitators for making the transition from school to work. .

Most international students felt as though the decision to remain in Canada and to eventually immigrate was a good decision and this decision was strengthened by their experiences to date. Students' expectations about better job prospects were unmet while their expectations about an enhanced quality of life in Canada were met. In conclusion, we hope that this study may be used as a launching point for further inquiry into understanding and improving the transition experiences and eventual success of international students who pursue employment and permanent immigration to Canada.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Have you been able to secure a job since graduating?

2. a. If yes to #1,
    i) What is your job?
    ii) Is your job/position related to your field of study?
    iii) Is this job what you expected to be doing?

2. b. If no to #1, what have you been doing to obtain employment?

3. What was (is) the most difficult aspect of the job search?

4. What has been the most difficult aspect of the new workplace? (If applicable)

5. What has been the most difficult aspect of the transition from student to employee (or applicant)?

6. Describe what would have been (would be) helpful in making the job search easier.

7. At this point, do you think remaining in Canada was a good decision for yourself and/or for your family? Explain.

8. How were your expectations about better job prospects/enhanced opportunities in Canada met/ not met?

9. How were your expectations about an enhanced quality of life in Canada met or not met?

10. Do you plan on immigrating to Canada when your 3year post-graduation work permit expires? Why or why not?

11. Has your immigration decision been strengthened or weakened by your work (or job search) experiences to date?

12. If you could tell Canadian employers anything, what would it be?

13. If you could tell campus support services anything there services, what would it be?

14. If you could tell other international students wishing to stay in Canada post-graduation anything, what would it be?

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Relationships among Career Thoughts, Career Interests, and Career Decision State

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships among negative career thoughts, profile elevation and differentiation scores on the Self-Directed Search, and career decision state, including level of decidedness and satisfaction with choice. Participants were 226 undergraduate students enrolled in a career course. Measures included the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) for career thoughts, the Self-Directed Search (SDS) for profile elevation and differentiation, the Occupational Alternatives Question (OAQ) for career decidedness, and the Satisfaction with Choice item for level of satisfaction with career choice. A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the amount of variance accounted for by negative career thoughts (i.e., decision-making confusion, commitment anxiety, and external conflict) in profile elevation, differentiation, career decidedness, and satisfaction with choice. Negative career thoughts were found to account for a significant amount of variance in profile elevation, career decidedness, and satisfaction with choice. Findings suggest the need to fully explore negative thinking that interferes with clients making effective career decisions.

Career professionals look for ways to use assessment instruments to the fullest. With limited time and funding, it is important to use all possible information from assessments to promote effective career exploration and decision making. Just using more tests or inventories may not produce additional useful information, but may add to the cost and time for career interventions.

The purpose of this study was to examine negative career thoughts in relation to interest inventory results and the individual's career decision state, or level of career decidedness and satisfaction with choice. More specifically, it explored how individuals' results from the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996a), the Self-Directed Search (SDS; Holland, 1994), and two measures of career decision state, the Occupational Alternatives Question (OAQ; Slaney, 1980) and Satisfaction with Choice item, are related. The results were expected to provide information for more efficient and effective use of the CTI and the SDS.

The SDS is an interest inventory widely used in career counseling and advising. While an understanding of vocational interests and Holland's RIASEC theory are important, dysfunctional thinking can interfere with the career decision-making process and prevent individuals from making effective career choices (Reardon & Lenz, 1998; Wright, Reardon, Peterson, & Osborn, 2000). However, use of the CTI to get a more complete diagnostic profile of clients' readiness for career decision making has been shown to produce significant improvements in five measures of dysfunctional career thoughts and vocational identity (Strohm, 2009). In addition, differentiation, consistency, and coherence of an individual's SDS profile are positively related to stability of career choice (Holland, 1997), suggesting that the SDS results may not be as stable when individuals have SDS codes with negative signs on these indicators (Reardon & Lenz, 1998).

Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Theory and the CTI

The CTI is based on CIP theory, which uses a three-level pyramid figure to display the important cognitive domains involved in career choice (Sampson et al., 2004). The model is comprised of three knowledge domains, which are represented by a pyramid. The foundation of the pyramid symbolizes the knowledge domains, which include self-knowledge and occupational knowledge. The middle level of the CIP pyramid represents the decision-making skills domain, which includes generic information-processing skills essential in gathering and using information to solve problems and make decisions. These skills include five CASVE phases for receiving external or internal signals of a gap between one's current and desired situation (Communication), interrelating problem components (Analysis), generating alternatives (Synthesis), prioritizing options or alternatives (Valuing), and forming an action plan to close the gap (Execution). At the top of the pyramid is the executive processing domain which relates to metacognitions, such as self-talk, self-awareness, and control and monitoring, that govern the choosing and sequencing of cognitive strategies career decision making.

Negative Career Thoughts

While progressing through the CASVE cycle, individuals may recog-

nize specific thoughts related to their career planning. Career thoughts include an individual's feelings, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations related to career decision-making and problem-solving effectiveness (e.g., "I can't wait to begin work in my chosen field; I know I can succeed as a financial analyst") (Sampson et al., 2004). Negative career thoughts are those dysfunctional cognitions that have a negative impact on one's career decision-making and problem-solving abilities (e.g., "I've messed up the best opportunity of my life; I'm never going to get another job that good.") (Sampson, et al., 2004; Sampson, et al., 1996a; Saunders, Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 2000).

Dysfunctional cognitions mediate and change an individual's career behavior (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996b). These cognitions cause individuals to avoid or inappropriately engage in career decision-making behaviors. This behavior can result in a myriad of outcomes such as procrastination, anxiety, dependency, and/or premature foreclosure, and may limit the effectiveness of career problem solving and decision making. Therefore, it is important that negative career thoughts be identified, challenged, and altered to help individuals improve their career decision making (Sampson, et al., 1996b). A screening instrument such as the CTI may be used to evaluate the degree to which the client is likely to benefit from the use of interest inventories such as the Self-Directed Search (SDS).

RIASEC Theory and the SDS

John Holland's RIASEC theory has been touted as the most empirically sound model (Rayman & Atanasoff, 1999). The "hallmark" of Holland's theory has been the application of vocational theory to practical client concerns (Spokane & Cruza-Guet, 2005), and the SDS is a basic tool in this process. Holland's RIASEC theory posits that vocational interests are an expression of one's personality, and the main goal is a good "fit" between individuals and their environments. This theory is based on four key assumptions (Holland, 1997). First, most people can be categorized as one of six personality types: Realistic, Inves-

tigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional (RIASEC). Each type has been described through preferences for activities and occupations, values, view of self, self-perception of competence and ability, perception by others, and what is avoided (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996). Second, most environments (e.g., jobs, leisure activities, and education or training programs) can also be categorized in the same way. It is assumed that people with a particular personality type tend to dominate the corresponding environment. For example, an Artistic environment is most likely to be comprised of Artistic personalities. Third, people search for environments that are compatible with their personality style, values, and skills, and fourth, peoples' behavior is determined by an interaction between their personality style and environment.

Primary and Secondary Constructs

The RIASEC theory assumptions and the hexagon provide a foundation for primary and secondary constructs that have informed research and practice (Holland, 1997). These constructs are thought to be diagnostic of individuals' career situations and their potential for successful career decision making. They are helpful in providing additional information regarding a client's decision-making process (Reardon & Lenz, 1998, 1999). The two primary constructs include personality type (RIASEC three-letter code) and congruence (the degree of match between a person and an environment).

The secondary constructs of interest to this study are (a) differentiation, "the level of definition or distinctiveness of a personality or occupational profile" (Holland et al., 1994 p. 262), and (b) profile elevation, the sum of the six RIASEC scores across all sections of the SDS (Fuller, Holland, & Johnston, 1999).

Differentiation

Differentiation is "the level of definition or distinctiveness of a personality or occupational profile" (Holland et al, 1994, p. 262). Differentiation can also be thought of as how well individuals know their likes and dislikes. A person with a highly differentiated SDS summary score will have a relatively large discrepancy between the highest and

lowest code scores, whereas an undifferentiated person earns similar scores across all six areas. Differentiation is commonly calculated by subtracting the lowest score from the highest (Holland, 1997) or by using the Iachan index (Iachan, 1984). The Iachan index, used in this study, takes into account the first, second, and fourth summary scores when calculating differentiation, and is considered to be more sensitive to the shape of the profile (Holland et al., 1994).

An individual's level of differentiation can affect any prediction a counselor might make from the person's code (Zunker & Osborn, 2005). Well-differentiated interests are unlikely to switch drastically, while those individuals with lower differentiation might be unclear as to what really interests them. High differentiation is positively correlated with more stability in work history and the directions of career preferences or work histories (Reardon & Lenz, 1998).

Profile Elevation

Profile elevation is the sum of the six section scores on the SDS, ranging from 14 to 300 and indicates an overall level of endorsement that is not specific to any RIASEC domain (Fuller et al., 1999). Gottfredson and Jones (1993) indicated profile elevation (PE) has been subsumed under the professional judgment of a counselor, but Fuller et al. noted that researchers have never completely understood its validity. In addition, Fuller et al. (1999) noted that profile elevation has not been accurately understood. Exploring profile elevation could provide counselors with additional information about clients that would help them tailor interventions to clients' needs. If high and low PE is determined by calculating one standard deviation above and below the normative sample, high PE are: (men, 150 >; women, 147 >), average range: (men, 129-149; women 128-146), and low: (men, < 128; women, < 127) (Holland, Fritzsche, & Powell, 1994). Yet, it has been suggested that more clinically relevant ranges be developed (Bullock & Reardon, 2008).

Differentiation and profile elevation are related, but not equivalent con-

structs. Individuals can have the same profile elevation (PE) whether they are highly differentiated or not. Research emphasizes the importance of not evaluating those with low PE and undifferentiated profiles and those with high PE and undifferentiated profiles in the same way (Swanson & Hansen, 1986). Undifferentiated individuals with high PE may be multipotential or indecisive, while undifferentiated individuals with low PE may need more help to identify skills, interests, and possible negative self-talk.

The contribution of profile elevation has been an area of focus for researchers. There has been some speculation about the relationship between low PE and depression for years (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002). Counselors often notice when a client does not have many interests and draw conclusions about an individual's personality or attitude. Lehberger (1989) concluded that those with lower SDS scores may require more intensive counseling than those with higher scores and distinct profile shapes.

Higher PE has been found to positively correlate with extraversion and openness to experience, extraversion, an expressive style, conscientiousness, and lower depressive personality traits (Holland, Johnston, & Asama, 1994; Gottfredson & Jones, 1993; Bullock & Reardon, 2008). Thus, individuals with higher PE would likely be more open and receptive to career counseling. Hirschi and Lage (2007) found meaningful connections between profile elevation and career exploration and career planning, which suggested that high profile elevation was positively related to degree of overall career-choice readiness attitudes.

There has been some discussion about a "general factor" impacted by PE that affects areas of interest and ability (Darcy & Tracey, 2003). They described this factor as similar to Spearman's "g" in intelligence. In the same way that intelligence is thought to be multifaceted, but still has an overarching g, they proposed that profile elevation might serve as an overarching or general factor of vocational interest. Profile elevation may "bias the relations with other variables or be related to other variables in a substantive manner"

(p. 227). In addition, there is speculation, based or prior research, that perhaps profile elevation is not just another secondary construct, but a superordinate construct that accounts for much of the variance in SDS profiles (Bullock & Reardon, 2008).

The constructs of negative career thoughts and profile elevation may account for variation in career decidedness and satisfaction, which are described in the next two sections.

Career Decision State

The concept of decision state in this study was based on level of career decidedness and satisfaction with occupational choice.

Decidedness

In order to provide effective career counseling services, counselors must examine an individual's career decision state, i.e., how decided and satisfied the person is about the career choice.

Decided individuals are those who can "provide a choice of occupation or a first choice with secondary alternatives" (Peterson et al., 1991, p. 174). Decided adolescents are more likely to have higher levels of career planning/exploration, career decision-making self-efficacy, less career indecision, and higher levels of self-esteem and vigilance (Creed, Pridaeux, & Pattoon, 2005). Undecided individuals are those who "…have not made a commitment to a specific occupational choice due to gaps in the knowledge necessary for choosing" (p. 82). An analysis by Lucas and Epperson (1988) found that undecided students differed with respect to their particular concerns and it would be beneficial to distinguish between types of undecided individuals.

In contrast, *indecisive* individuals cannot generate occupational alternatives and lack sufficient self- and occupational knowledge to carry out the decision-making process. Tyler (1969) was one of the early psychologists to distinguish between career indecision and indecisiveness. He regarded undecided individuals as having problems coming up with a plan of action, where indecisiveness stems from personal issues. The term *indecisive* can be used similarly to the "chronically undecided

student" (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983). They tend to exhibit a lack of sense of identity and possess a maladaptive approach to problem solving, self-perceptual problems, and externalized attribution, along with a high level of anxiety (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Holland & Holland, 1977; Peterson et al., 1991). Additionally, decided individuals reported less control and more autonomy support from their peers and less control from their parents than individuals in a chronically undecided group (Guay, Ratelle, Senecal, Larose, & Deschenes, 2006). Finally, in a study of college attrition, Lounsbury, Saudargas, and Gibson (2004) found a significant negative relationship between career decidedness and intention to withdraw from college. Research shows that a feeling of decidedness and commitment to a career choice is an important facet of overall career-choice readiness (Creed, Prideaux, & Patton, 2005; Powell & Luzzo, 1998).

Satisfaction with Choice

An individual's satisfaction with career choice can also help to conceptualize career decidedness. An early study by Zener and Schnuelle (1972) reported the use of a single item in the form of a question, "How satisfied are you with your first choice?" followed by six levels of positive to negative responses. Kleiman et al. (2004) found satisfaction with occupational choice was negatively correlated with career decision-making difficulties in college students.

The Present Study

Negative career thoughts, profile elevation, differentiation, and career decidedness have received attention by researchers, but minimal research has directly explored how dysfunctional career thoughts are related to an individual's SDS code and secondary constructs in RIASEC theory. One study (Wright et al., 2000) examined these relationships and did not find significant zero order correlates between differentiation and negative career thoughts.

Holland's theory has generated abundant research examining primary and secondary constructs within the theory, but these constructs have not been

examined in relationship to negative career thoughts, differentiation, career decidedness, and satisfaction with choice. This study used a co-relational research design to focus on four questions of interest: the relationships between career thoughts and (a) profile elevation, (b) differentiation, (c) career decidedness, and (d) satisfaction with career choice. It was hypothesized that as career thoughts decreased profile elevation, differentiation, career decidedness, and satisfaction with career choice would increase.

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of 226 undergraduate students enrolled in a college-level career course. Common reasons for enrolling in this course are to explore career options and learn more about career decision making. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 38 years, M = 20.9 years, SD = 2.2 years, with 49.6% female and 50.4% male. According to the student data sheets, the demographic breakdown of the sample was 65.9% Caucasian, 20.4% African-American, 6.6% Hispanic/Latino, 2.7% other, and 1.8% Asian. As for academic class, the sample was dominated by seniors 53%, followed by juniors, 15%; sophomores, 23%; and freshman, 9%. While no participants asked to withdraw from the study, 30% of the initial sample did not complete the full protocol. Data collection was conducted during the first week of class, and some students dropped the class before the university drop-add process for registration process was complete. Additional students took the course for partial credit (one or two credit hours) which prevented their completion of all research instruments. Inspection of demographic characteristics of completers and non-completers revealed no pattern of differences.

Instruments

Career thoughts inventory. The CTI is a 48 item self-report inventory designed to measure negative career thoughts that impede career decision making. The CTI yields three subscale scores, Decision-Making Confusion (DMC), Commitment Anxiety (CA),

and External Conflict (EC). The DMC scale (14 items) measures "an inability to initiate or sustain the decision making process as a result of disabling emotions and/or a lack of understanding about the decision making process itself" (Sampson et al., 1996a, p. 2). The CA scale (10 items) measures "an inability to make a commitment to a specific career choice, accompanied by generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision making process, with anxiety perpetuating the indecision" (Sampson et al., 1996a, p. 2). The EC scale (5 items) measures "an inability to balance the importance of one's own self-perceptions with the importance of input from significant others, resulting in a reluctance to assume responsibility for decision making" (Sampson et al., 1996a, p. 2). The three subscales scores, and not the CTI total score, were used in the present study's analyses.

Internal consistency for the CTI has been shown to range from .96 for college students (Sampson et al., 1996b) with the three subscale alpha coefficients ranging from .94 to .77. Test-retest reliability at four weeks for a college sample was as follows: Total Score = .86, DMC = .82, CA = .79, EC = .74 (Sampson et al., 1996b). The convergent validity of the CTI has been supported with correlations from Indecision Scale of the Career Decision Scale at .70 (Sampson et al., 1996a), the Career Decision Profile (Jones, 1989), the Neuroticism domain on the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and the Career Decision Making Difficulties Questionnaire (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996) total and subscale scores (Kleiman et al., 2004). In another sample, the CTI was administered to 199 clients and 149 non-clients at two universities and the client population had significantly higher scores on the total scales and three construct scales than the non-client group (Sampson et al., 1996b).

Self-directed search (SDS; Holland, Fritzsche, & Powell, 1994). The SDS is based on Holland's RIASEC theory and is self-administered in 35-45 minutes. The SDS *Assessment* booklet includes a measure of expressed interests or vocational aspirations (the Daydreams Section) and a measure of

assessed interests. The latter is obtained when users respond to SDS items in four sections: Activities (11 questions per RIASEC section that are endorsed *like* or *dislike*); Competencies (11 questions per RIASEC section that are endorsed *yes* or *no* to assess skills assess); Occupations (14 occupations per RIASEC section that are endorsed *yes* or *no* to assess occupations of interest or dislike interests); and Self-Estimates (12 Likert-scale ratings (1 is *low* and 7 is *high*) to indicate self-estimates of skills and abilities as compared to those of similar age across each RIASEC type). An individual's three-letter summary or Holland code is calculated by summing the positive or score responses from each of the four sections included in the *Assessment* booklet (Holland, 1994). Profile elevation and differentiation scores will be derived for each participant's SDS responses. Profile elevation is calculated by summing the six RIASEC summary scores. Differentiation was calculated using the previously described Iachan Index (Iachan, 1984).

Intercorrelations among the SDS: Form R results (Holland, 1994) and measures of vocational aspiration and college major indicate concurrent validity for male and female college students ranging from .32 to .39 (Holland, Fritzsche, & Powell, 1994). Substantial reliability for the summary scales on the SDS are indicated by the internal consistency coefficients (KR-20) ranging from .90 to .94, and test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .76 to .89 (Holland et al., 1994). Overall, support exists for documenting both the reliability and validity of the SDS.

Occupational alternatives question (OAQ; Zener & Schnuelle, 1972; modified by Slaney, 1980). The OAQ is a measure of occupational decidedness which asks respondents the number of occupations they are considering and the level of decidedness pertaining to these occupations. The OAQ includes two parts: (a) "List all of the occupations you are considering right now" and (b) "Which occupation is your first choice? If undecided, write undecided." The OAQ is scored on a scale from one to four and is rated as follows: 1 = a first choice is given with no alternatives; 2 = a first choice is given with al-

ternatives listed as well; 3 = no first choice is given, only alternatives; and, 4 = no choices or alternatives are given. Therefore, the higher the OAQ score, the less decided the individual. Individuals who report having one occupational choice with no alternatives are said to be decided individuals, while those who are unable to list any career choices are classified as undecided. The OAQ has been found to have convergent validity with other measures of career indecision, including the Satisfaction with Career Scale, the Vocational Decision Making Difficulties Scale, and the Career Decision Scale (Slaney, Stafford, & Russell, 1981). Slaney (1978) found stability of OAQ responses over a 6-week time period.

Satisfaction with choice question (SCQ; Zener & Schnuelle, 1972; modified by Holland, Gottfredson, & Nafziger, 1975). This instrument asks a single question, "How well satisfied are you with your first choice?" and is used to assess one's level of satisfaction with career choice. This item is rated on a scale from one to six, and is scored as follows: 1 = well satisfied with choice; 2 = satisfied, but have a few doubts; 3 = not sure; 4 = dissatisfied and intend to remain; 5 = very dissatisfied and intend to change; and, 6 = undecided about my future career. Similar to the OAQ, the higher the score on the SCQ, the greater the degree of dissatisfaction with choice. Slaney, Stafford, and Russell (1981) reported average correlations of .43, .53, and .44 between the Satisfaction Question and other measures of career decidedness, including the OAQ, Vocational Decision Making Difficulty Scale, and the Career Decision Scale.

Student data sheet. The student data sheet served as a demographic questionnaire and included information such as age, sex, year in school, major, previous work experience, extracurricular activities, and ethnicity, as well as the OAQ and the SCQ. This form was used to describe the study sample.

Procedures

Approval for this study with human participants was obtained from the university institutional review board. During the first week of class, students were recruited to participate voluntarily in the study. The students were made aware verbally and through written informed consent that choosing not to participate would in no way affect their course grade. Participants were administered the research packet, including the CTI and Student Data Sheet. This phase of data collection lasted approximately 30 minutes. In the third week of class, as part of the normal class procedure, students completed the paper and pencil version of the SDS. Data from the SDS were entered and scored using the computer software program Self-Directed Search Software Portfolio for Windows ® (Reardon & PAR Staff, 2001) by course instructors.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and ranges for the variables of interest are presented in Table 1. The DMC, CA, and EC scales from the CTI, the profile elevation and differentiation scores from the SDS, the OAQ, and the Satisfaction with Choice items were analyzed.

item structure, an index of reliability could not be calculated for the Occupational Alternatives Question (OAQ) or Satisfaction with Choice item. Scale reliabilities for the SDS were not calculated, as individual item responses were not available for this sample.

The statistical program, PASW (Predictive Analytics SoftWare) 18 was used to complete the statistical analysis of the data. Preliminary analyses revealed that assumptions of normality were not violated. Specifically, there were no violations of skewness or kurtosis. In addition, there were no violations of multicollinearity or linearity. The correlations between all predictor and criterion variables are presented in Table 1.

Career Thoughts and Profile Elevation

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed no significant relationships between profile elevation and any of the three individual predictor variables (DMC, CA, or EC). A multiple regression was used to examine the combined effect of the three predictor variables.

Table 1

Variable correlations, Means, SD, and Range

	Decision-Making Confusion	Commitment Anxiety	External Conflict	Profile Elevation	Differentiation	Career Decidedness	Satisfaction with Choice
DMC	1	.662**	.617**	-.114	-.129	.302**	.307**
CA		1	.553**	.055	-.139*	.318**	.333**
EC			1	-.012	-.137*	.12	.092
PE				1	-1.57	-.011	.021
Differentiation					1	-.046	-.047
Career Decidedness						1	.823**
Satisfaction							1
M	10.67	13.08	4.69	133.26	6.25	2.42	3.47
SD	7.64	5.84	2.97	31.98	2.87	.80	2.26
Participant Range	0-38	0-27	0-13	41-250	1-16	1-4	1-6

*-p<.05; **p<.001

Scale and subscale reliability analyses were conducted for the CTI. The reliability estimates for the CTI total were calculated as follows: DMC = .93, CA = .87, and EC =.67. These estimates were consistent with previous studies (Sampson et al., 1996b; Reed, 2006) for DMC and CA. There was a .10 difference between this sample's EC estimate (.67) and the standardization sample (.77) (Sampson et al., 1996b). Given their 1-

The overall model was significant beyond the .05 level ($F_{(3, 222)} = 3.456$, $p = .017$). The model R^2, reflecting the overall strength of the relationship between the profile elevation and the predictor variables, was .045, meaning that 4.5% of profile elevation can be explained by negative career thoughts (Table 2). The adjusted R^2, compensating for the positive bias of the R^2, was .032.

Table 2

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses

	Total R^2	Adj. R^2	β
Profile Elevation	.045	.032	
DMC[a]			-.288**
CA[b]			.222*
EC[c]			.043
Differentiation	.025	.012	
DMC[a]			-.032
CA[b]			-.076
EC[c]			-.076
Career Decidedness	.132	.121	
DMC[a]			.238**
CA[b]			.253**
EC[c]			-.167*
Satisfaction with Choice	.153	.142	
DMC[a]			.254**
CA[b]			.288**
EC[c]			-.224**

** Beta weight is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Beta weight is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). [a] Career Thoughts Inventory: Decision-Making Confusion. [b] Career Thoughts Inventory: Commitment Anxiety. [c] Career Thoughts Inventory: External Conflict.

Although not directly related, it is interesting to note that as DMC decreased profile elevation increased, but this was not the case with regard to EC and CA. CA increased as profile elevation increased, and the relationship with EC was not significant.

Career Thoughts and Differentiation

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed significant relationships (one-tailed) between differentiation and CA (-.139), as well as differentiation and EC (-.137). The relationship between differentiation and DMC was non-significant.

A multiple regression analysis was used to examine the combined effect of the three predictor variables. Negative career thoughts were inversely related to differentiation, decreasing with every single unit increase in differentiation (DMC = -.012, CA = -.037, EC = -.073). However, the overall model was not significant ($F_{(3, 222)}$ = 1.903, p= .130).

Career Thoughts and Decidedness

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed significant relationships between career decidedness and DMC (r =.302), and career decidedness and CA (r =.318), but not between career decidedness and EC (r =.120).

To examine the combined effect of the three CIP cognitive constructs, DMC, CA, and EC, a multiple regression analysis was used. The overall

model was significant beyond the .01 level ($F_{(3, 222)}$ = 11.295, p = .000). The model R^2, reflecting the overall strength of the relationship between career decidedness and the predictor variables, was .132 (Table 2), meaning that 13.2% of career decidedness can be explained by negative career thoughts. The adjusted R^2, compensating for the positive bias of the R^2, was .121.

However, it may be noted that EC increased when the OAQ score decreased (indicating a greater degree of decidedness). Conversely, both DMC and CA increased as the OAQ score increased, indicating a lesser degree of career decidedness.

Career Thoughts and Satisfaction

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed significant relationships between satisfaction with choice and DMC (r = .307) and satisfaction with choice and CA (r = .333), but not between satisfaction with choice and EC (r = .092).

To examine the combined effect of the three predictor variables, DMC, CA, and EC, on the prediction of satisfaction with choice, a multiple regression analysis was used. The overall model was significant beyond the .01 level ($F_{(3, 222)}$ = 13.396, p = .000). The model R^2, reflecting the overall strength of the relationship between satisfaction with choice and the predictor variables was .153, meaning that 15.3% of satisfaction

with choice can be explained by negative career thoughts (Table 2). The adjusted R^2, compensating for the positive bias of the R^2, was .142.

As scores on the Satisfaction with Choice item increased (indicating less satisfaction with one's first career choice), DMC and CA also increased. However, this was not true for EC, which increased as the Satisfaction with Choice score decreased (indicating more satisfaction with one's first career choice).

Discussion

Career Thoughts and Profile Elevation

Previous research and theory led us to speculate that as negative career thoughts decreased profile elevation would increase. Simple correlations were examined and revealed no significant relationships between profile elevation and any of the negative career thoughts predictor variables (i.e., DMC, CA, or EC). However, a multiple regression exploring the relationships between the predictor variables of DMC, CA, and EC and criterion variable (profile elevation) supported the overall regression model, with decision-making confusion decreasing and commitment anxiety increasing as profile elevation increased. The relationship between PE and DMC may have been expected, given the discussion of low profile elevation and depression (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002), the positive correlation between DMC and depression found in previous research (Sampson et al., 1996b), and the problems one might have making decisions while in a depressed state. Previous research indicated that high profile elevation is positively related to the degree of overall career-choice readiness attitudes (Hirschi & Lage, 2007) and that individuals with lower profile elevation scores may require more counseling (Lehberger, 1989). Bullock and Reardon (2005) suggested that clients with high profile elevation scores would be more open to considering options and conscientious about tasks presented to them.

Perhaps profile elevation increases as people become aware of all the possi-

ble options available to them. With regards to the unexpected findings between PE and CA, once an individual has a working list of options, it is possible that commitment anxiety would increase because the person is now becoming less tentative and closer to making a commitment. Someone who has low profile elevation may not be anxious about committing to a specific option because a list of possible options has not yet emerged.

It is important not to overgeneralize these results. Although the regression model did reach statistical significance, negative career thoughts only account for 4.5% of the variation in profile elevation. Therefore, many other factors likely influence profile elevation, and counselors should be careful not to assume the client possesses high levels of negative career thoughts based on low profile elevation. When working with clients who have low profile elevation on the SDS, counselors should listen for negative self-talk and consider administering the CTI to identify, alter, and challenge these thoughts (Sampson et al., 2004).

Career Thoughts and Differentiation

Previous research and theory led us to expect that as negative career thoughts decreased differentiation would increase. Differentiation refers to the distinctiveness of an interest profile but can also be conceptualized as how well individuals know their likes and dislikes. A multiple regression analysis revealed that negative career thoughts as defined by DMC, CA, and EC did not account for a significant amount of variation in differentiation. One possible explanation for this unexpected lack of a relationship is that differentiation has received less empirical support and is viewed as a weaker indicator than other constructs (Holland, 1997). These results are also consistent with a study by Wright et al. (2000) that did not find a significant correlation between differentiation and negative career thoughts.

For practical purposes, counselors should refrain from using differentiation on the SDS to predict clients' thoughts about making a career decision. The findings of this study and previous research indicate that there is insufficient evidence to suggest a significant relationship between differentiation and negative career thoughts (Wright et al., 2000).

Career Thoughts, Decidedness, and Satisfaction

Negative career thoughts accounted for a significant amount of variation in career decidedness and satisfaction. Specifically, DMC and CA decreased, while EC increased, as career decidedness and satisfaction increased. The relationship decidedness and satisfaction demonstrated with DMC and CA makes intuitive sense in that once you have a made a decision you are satisfied with, you have likely already dealt with anxiety about committing to the choice and believe you possess decision-making skills. It is possible that EC's lower level of reliability in this study (.67) was a factor in the unexpected relationship EC demonstrated with decidedness and satisfaction. High EC scores indicate a compromised ability to balance the opinions of self with the opinions of significant others. An alternate explanation may be that individuals outwardly commit to or 'decide' on a career choice they are personally not satisfied with in order to avoid conflict with significant others, but they are actually undecided or indecisive. This is consistent with the concept of the "decided-conflict avoidant" individual in Sampson et al.'s taxonomy (2004).

As individuals become more decided about their career choice, they may also become more confident and positive about their ability to make decisions. However, with increased decidedness, concern about the values of significant others' input, views of society, or culture may also increase. The relationship between external conflict and career decidedness may indicate that as an individual approaches making a decision, they may begin looking at their options on a deeper and more sophisticated level. Counselors may work with clients who appear decided or confident about making a decision, but they should also check with these clients about the importance of balancing input from significant others with their own values. For example, the counselor could question how individuals arrived at their decision, how the decision was influenced by significant others, and how the decision fits the individuals' values.

Limitations of this Study

There were several factors in the sample that limited generalizability. First, the sample was primarily Caucasian, which limits the generalizability of the sample to other ethnic groups. Second, the sample was dominated by students in the upper division, 68%, while only 32% were in the lower division. At this university, students are required to declare a major by their sophomore year and the upper division students were probably more decided than those in the lower division with respect to career planning and decision making. Specifically, they are more likely to have made a career decision and to be in the Execution phase of the CASVE cycle. By signing up for the course, it is assumed that students are looking for assistance in making a career choice on some level, and students that are openly seeking career assistance may be inherently different from those who are not. Lastly, while the mean scores on DMC and CA were consistent with the standardization norms, EC was higher ($M = 4.69$ as compared to 3.32). Since this group had higher levels of EC than the standardization group, this may have affected the relationship between EC and other variables. Additionally, the internal consistency of EC ($\alpha = .67$) was lower than found in previous studies and may have affected the overall reliability of the findings associated with this construct. A possible limitation of the data analysis is the attrition rate caused by students dropping the course or taking fewer than three credits of this variable credit course; however, the demographic characteristics of completers and non-completers did not appear to vary.

Implications for Practice

This study also provides additional support for the importance of career interventions that target negative career thoughts (Strohm, 2009). Given the relationship between negative career thoughts and career decidedness, as well as satisfaction with choice, interventions

(such as the CTI Workbook, Sampson, et al., 1996c) designed to restructure cognitions that impede one's ability to engage in the career decision-making process are especially important. Finally, it may be noted that while the American English version of SDS-Form R was used in this study, the instrument is also available in Canadian English and French. More information about these versions of the SDS-Form R is available at http://www4.parinc.com/.

As individuals become more decided about their career choice, they are likely to also become more confident and positive about their ability to make decisions. However, with increased decidedness, it is possible that concern about the views of significant others and the views of society become more important. This relationship may indicate that as an individual approaches making a decision, they may begin looking at their options on a deeper and more sophisticated level while considering the views of others. Counselors may work with clients who appear decided or confident about making a decision, but they may want to check with these clients about the importance of balancing input from significant others. These findings suggest that just because clients may present as very decided, this does not universally mean that they could not benefit from additional counseling or that they are not concerned how their career decision could impact others.

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Transitioning into, through, and out of Graduate School: A Theoretical Model

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Abstract

In recent years, graduate education has received increasing attention, but while extensive research has been conducted on the experiences of graduate students, scant literature has addressed the transitional pathways of those making the decision to attend graduate school, or those preparing either to leave or to graduate. The process by which students make the decision to apply for, enrol in and attend graduate school has not been well researched. A central aim of this paper, then, is to contribute to the sparse literature on graduate education transitions, giving consideration to and identifying influential factors thought to play a role in a student's decisions to enrol and persist in graduate school. A theoretical model of graduate student transitions will be presented, developed through a synthesis of research on the persistence and attrition of undergraduate and graduate students. While it is acknowledged that the factors identified are in no way exhaustive of the many concerns and issues graduate students face in gaining entry, persisting and departing from their studies, it is hoped that this model will stimulate further discussion and prompt exploration into the most influential factors that help to shape their experiences and decisions; and the implications of these on career trajectories.

As a more educated workforce becomes a priority to an increasingly complex, fast-paced and technological society, the number of people opting to continue on or return to studies at the graduate level continues to rise. Between 1999 and 2008, enrolments in Master's degree programs in Canada rose by 40%, while enrolments at the Doctoral level rose by over 60% (Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, 2011). In recent years, graduate education has garnered much attention, but while extensive research has been conducted on the experiences of students enrolled in graduate programs, scant literature has addressed the transitional pathways of those making the decision to attend graduate school, or those preparing either to leave or to graduate. Furthermore, much of the existing literature almost exclusively addresses doctoral education and tends to exclude masters and professional degree programs.

The process by which students make the decision to apply for, enrol in and attend graduate school has not been well researched, and while numerous factors have been identified as influential to this decision-making process, no model has yet been developed, to the author's knowledge, to outline the transitions into, through, and out of graduate school. A central aim of this paper, then, is to contribute to the sparse literature on graduate education transitions, giving consideration to and identifying key factors thought to be most influential in a student's decisions to enrol and persist in graduate school.

A tentative model of graduate student transitions is presented here, developed through a synthesis of research on the persistence and attrition of undergraduate and graduate students, and may be seen as containing elements of pre-existing models. The factors included therein have been identified through thematic analysis of the extant literature as essential components of post-secondary education pathways. It is important to note that enrolment in graduate school exemplifies persistence in and of itself, as students who progress to this level of higher education have persisted through undergraduate education, and thus it is difficult - and not entirely necessary, it may be argued, to separate those factors influential in the decisions to enrol from those influential in the decision to either persist or to depart.

Student Transitions

Much has changed in graduate education in recent years; students enter graduate programs at very different stages of their lives and careers. In spite of these individual differences, however, it has been noted that all adult learners experience educational transitions as a process over time. A transition is defined as an event or a non-event that alters one's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions; a theory of transition has been developed for adults, characterized by three stages: "moving in", "moving through", and "moving on." (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering (1989). These phrases have been referred to previously in discussions of doctoral student persistence (Cockrell & Shelley, 2011; Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Johnson, 2006; Polson, 2003) and are considered in the development of the graduate student transition model presented here.

At all levels of the graduate student transitions process, it is essential that research on and theoretical models of undergraduate student transitions be considered, for a number of reasons. First, the lack of information on graduate student transitional pathways makes this unavoidable. Second, many factors that influence a student's decision to attend and persist in post-secondary may also influence these same decisions at the graduate level. Thus, the existing literature on undergraduate transitions proves a fertile ground for exploring the educational pathways of the graduate student.

Breen and Jonsson (2000) note that sociological analyses of educational pathways have long been studied as sequential transitions between grades or levels of education; Mare (1980) popularized this type of model. They do note a limitation of this model, however, in that it assumes that students progress through the educational system in a uni-linear sequential path, while in fact,

many school systems have "parallel branches of study" (Breen & Jonsson, 2000, p.754). Indeed, education can be viewed as a complex, non-linear process. Breen and Jonsson's (2000) research extends on Mare's model, finding that the pathway a student takes through the school system influences the probability of making subsequent educational transitions. Hence, the model presented here assumes a non-linear trajectory of many choices and opportunities as the student transitions from undergraduate to graduate student, and from school to the workplace.

Shifting Demographics- the Graduate Student as Non-traditional Student

Individuals enter graduate programs with pre-existing attributes and experiences that ultimately shape their entrance into and passage through the post-secondary education system. In setting out to identify key factors that characterize graduate student transitions, it is necessary to consider the changing demographics of the graduate student population. Existing literature on traditional and non-traditional students provide some insight into envisioning a profile of the contemporary graduate student.

The early traditional doctoral student could be described as a twenty-something affluent, single white male, studying full time (Gardner, 2009; Offerman, 2011). Offerman (2011) writes that the contemporary doctoral student is more likely to meet the criteria of a non-traditional as opposed to the traditional student; in fact he makes the argument that perhaps this term may no longer be appropriate. While no standard definition of non-traditional students exists; several can be found in the existing literature on the subject (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Gilardi & Guglielmettim, 2011; Rendon, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Characteristics of the non-traditional student include being older, a commuter, engaged in family and/or work life, financially independent, studies part time, and may come from a lower socio-economic and/or is a member of an ethnic minority.

If we consider the demographics of today's graduate student, most would be said to fit the above criteria of a non-traditional student except for being in receipt of further educational credentials. The median age of doctoral students in the United States in 2004 was 33.3 years; nearly 2 out of 3 was married or in a common-law type relationship, and almost a third were first generation students (Gardner, 2009). Gender is also an important characteristic to consider when describing the contemporary graduate student, as the majority of graduate students today in both Canada and the United States are now female (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2010; Wendler et al. 2010).

Offerman (2011) notes that while the literature addressing the challenges faced by non-traditional undergraduate students is quite extensive, very little research has explored the issues facing non-traditional students at the graduate level. Furthermore, Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) argue that the current university system does not seem to be equipped to meet the needs of this group, continuing to maintain a system designed for the traditional type of student.

Research has shown that non-traditional students have a higher rate of attrition than traditional students (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). These students face the challenge of finding a balance between their academic and external commitments that allows for them to sustain a sufficient level of engagement; it has been found that the most important variables in the retention of non-traditional students are an increased use of learning support services and higher levels of perceived social integration (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). These and other factors, and their influence on persistence, will be examined more fully below.

Consideration was given to increased enrolments in graduate programs and the changing demographics of the graduate student body in the development of the theoretical model of graduate student transitions presented below (see Figure 1). This model was inspired by the current literature and pre-existing models of student persistence and attrition and may be seen as an amalgamation of the current research on undergraduate and graduate student transitional pathways. The remainder of this paper will entail a discussion of the factors contained within the model that have been identified from an extensive review of the literature as influential for graduate student transitions into, through, and out of the graduate education system.

Going to Graduate School

Individuals enter graduate school at different stages of their lives and under varying circumstances. Research has
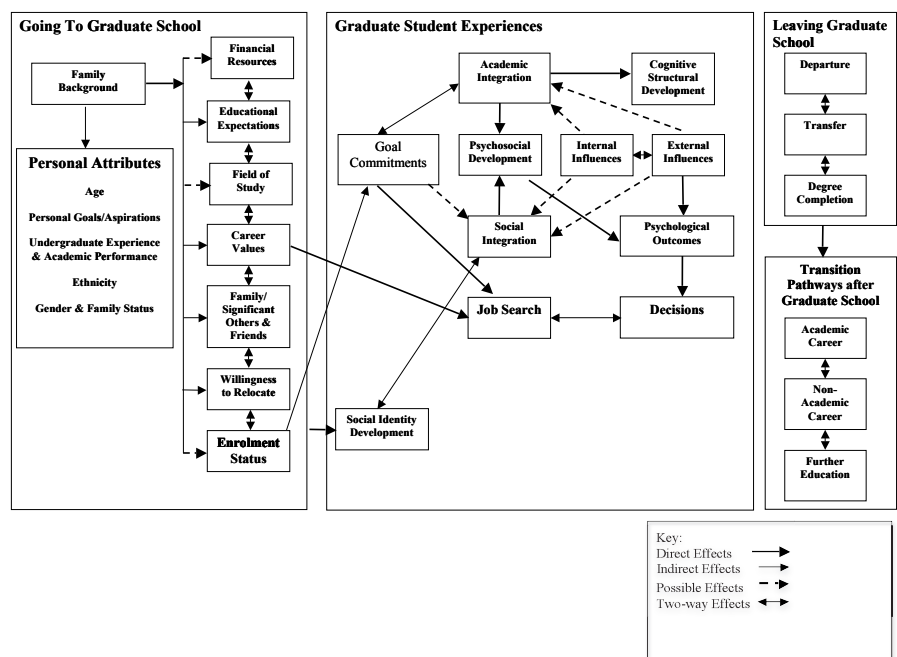

Figure 1. Graduate Student Transitions Model

examined the role of background factors in the decision-making process of enrolling and persisting in graduate school. Tinto (1993) posits that personal attributes, along with educational experiences prior to entering graduate school, help to shape individual goals and commitments upon entry. The impact of these attributes may be indirect but important from a longitudinal standpoint. Several background factors are included in the model here, having been addressed in the literature as being highly influential to educational enrolment and persistence. The inter-connectedness of personal attributes and background characteristics on graduate student enrolment and persistence is made evident.

Family background.

Research on the influence of family background on graduate school enrolment and persistence presents mixed findings. Mare (1980) and Stolzenberg (1994) found that social background has little if any direct effect on the transition from undergraduate to graduate education. Ethington and Smart (1986) also found little direct effect on this transition. Only parental educational level had a direct influence on the decision to attend graduate school, but variables associated with the undergraduate experience were found to have a stronger direct influence. Findings from this research indicate that social origins also have an indirect effect through undergraduate academic performance. Conversely, Mullen, Goyette and Soares (2003) found that parent's education has an indirect effect on the transition from undergraduate to graduate study, working mainly through the characteristics of a student's undergraduate institution, academic performance, educational expectations, and career values, factors examined in more detail below. Mastekaasa (2006) also found considerable effects of social origins on the transition from the masters to the Ph.D. level. DiMaggio and Mohr (1985) found a slight correlation between cultural capital and graduate school attendance. Parental educational attainment is closely linked with, and even included as a measure of, a student's cultural and social capital (see Perna, 2004). A more recent quantitative analysis of cultural capital and graduate student achievement (Moss, 2005) found that neither parental socioeconomic status nor cultural capital had a statistically significant relationship with graduate academic achievement. At best, family background appears to have an indirect influence through a number of other variables, and is included in the model here as a factor in graduate student transitions.

Personal attributes.

Age. Mullen, Goyette, and Soares (2003) included this variable in their analysis of graduate school enrolment as family background is believed to influence the age at which students complete their undergraduate degrees. To return to the earlier discussion of graduate students as being classified as 'non-traditional', age is certainly a factor to consider in an examination of the choice to enrol in graduate level education, particularly as it exerts an influence on a students' goals, whether they be at the personal, educational, or career level. These factors will be discussed in more detail below.

Personal goals/aspirations. While this variable may be linked with educational expectations and/or career values, it may also drive one's decision to enrol in a graduate program as an independent variable. As has been noted, some students return to study at the graduate level despite having or having had a fulfilling career. Attaining an advanced degree may be a goal in and of itself. Aspirations may also be linked to family background (see Hayden, 2008 for a discussion of this connection).

Undergraduate experience and academic performance. Research has found grade performance to be the most important factor in predicting persistence in college (Tinto, 1975). Mullen Goyette and Soares (2003) found that college performance was also found to have a strong effect on the decision to attend graduate school. Ethington and Smart (1986) found that the extent of a student's involvement within the undergraduate institution impacts strongly on later educational decisions. They concluded that the successful integration of a student within the social and academic systems of the undergraduate institution directly and indirectly enhances the likelihood that the student will persist to degree completion and continuing on to graduate education. These findings emphasize the importance of academic and social integration, discussed in more detail below.

Ethnicity. Bean and Metzner (1985) report that studies examining the relationship between undergraduate student's ethnicity and persistence is mixed; it is hypothesized that ethnicity may have an indirect effect on persistence through a negative influence on GPA as a result of the comparatively poorer education provided for minority students at the secondary level. There is a lack of literature addressing the experiences of international students, particularly at the doctoral level (see Le and Gardner, 2007). More recent research could provide further information of the possible effects of ethnic origins on graduate enrolment and persistence.

Gender and family status. Women now account for the majority of both enrolments and degrees awarded in Canada at the Bachelor's and Master's program levels, and just under half at the Ph.D. level (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2010). While women outnumber males in terms of graduate enrolment and degree completion, Offerman (2011) acknowledges that women may struggle more in achieving a balance between study and personal time constraints and responsibilities; degree completion may be delayed due to such factors. Bean and Metzner (1985) anticipates that gender is likely to have indirect effects on attrition through family responsibilities and opportunity to transfer. Ehrenberg, Zuckerman, Groen, and Brucker (2010) found that there were no gender differences in attrition and completion among students who were single upon entry into doctoral studies; interestingly, marriage and motherhood were not found to be detrimental to women. Gender is included in the model presented here as a background variable as it is believed to have an impact on persistence, both in terms of gaining entry at the graduate level, as well as degree completion.

Financial resources.

Ethington and Smart (1985) found that, along with degree completion, receipt of financial aid has the greatest impact on enrolment in graduate school. Tinto (1993) notes that a lack of financial resources in the first two stages of doctoral persistence may result in a lengthened time to candidacy, as students may attend school part-time or work while enrolled in school to help pay expenses. Thus, it was concluded that the impact of financial resources on persistence is indirect- the longer the degree takes, the less likely students are to finish. At the later stage of persistence, however, the primary effect of limited financial support on persistence may be mostly direct, in that one's ability to devote the necessary time to the completion of the research may be reduced.

Educational expectations.

Mullen Goyette and Soares (2003) found that family background continues to influence student's educational attainment through their expectations. Bean and Metzner (1985) discuss educational goals as a background variable in their model of non-traditional student attrition; numerous studies have demonstrated a connection between pre-enrolment educational goals and persistence. Tinto (1975) includes a discussion of educational expectations in a factor he termed an individual's educational 'goal commitment' in his model of college dropout, and noted that the extent to which one is committed to an educational goal is directly related to persistence. Assuming that students continue to be influenced by these goals as they continue on to educational pursuits at the graduate level, it is included here as a background factor.

Field of study.

Tinto (1993) writes that doctoral persistence is more likely to be a reflection of the normative and structural character of the field of study "and the judgments that describe acceptable performance than a reflection of the broader university" (p.232). Tinto also notes that doctoral persistence is more likely to be reflective of, and framed by, the particular types of student and faculty communities that reside in the local department, program, or school. Tinto proposes that "Doctoral students, in seeking entry to a profession or field of work, are likely to orient themselves toward the norms that they perceive as determining success in that field of work" (p.233). It is speculated that this is the case for Master's students as well. A graduate students' choice of field of study is also likened to be influenced by one's family background (Goyette & Mullen, 2002).

Career values.

Career values may arise from personal attributes or goals. Non-traditional graduate students may have very different career aspirations than traditional students (Weidman, Twale & Stein, 2001); many are already established in a career at the time they enrol in graduate studies, and for the majority, an advanced degree, and the additional credential and ascribed status that accompanies it, is seen as a necessary stepping stone in career advancement. Indeed, for some, further education is seen as a means of transitioning into a new career (Offerman, 2011). Rising graduate enrolments, particular at the Master's level, may in fact reflect a high degree of career commitment on the part of individuals returning to upgrade their credentials. Many of these students have no desire to persist beyond the level of education deemed necessary for their desired career or advancement within one's current occupation. Other graduate students are following the traditional pathway to the professoriate; their persistence is reflective of high goal commitment as it pertains to their academic career aspirations. Stolzenberg (1994) found that the choice of entering a graduate school program is influenced by one's attitudes and values about work. Such values may be influenced by a student's family background.

Family/significant others and friends.

Research emphasizes the influence of peers in explaining differences between institutions in student persistence (Astin, 1993; Berger & Milem, 2000; Titus, 2004; Weidman, 1989). Peers may have an indirect influence on persistence through measures of integration; this assumption is supported by the findings of a study conducted by Thomas (2000). This may very well be an important factor to consider at the graduate level, as smaller cohorts typically interact routinely through the completion of coursework and other program requirements. Sweitzer (2009) looks at the role of doctoral students' personal communities or what she refers to as 'developmental networks' and their influence on professional identity development. A more recent study explores the experiences of female graduate students and the effects of a lack of marital/social support (Williams-Tolliver, 2010). The influence of others is included in the model here as a indirect factor due to the belief that the decisions of graduate students are impacted to a large extent by external influences, a fact that is explored in more detail below.

Willingness to relocate.

Willingness to relocate is included here as an indirect influence under the assumption that location of a program is likely to have a larger impact on students at the graduate level than at the undergraduate level, as it is probable that these students have outside responsibilities that extend beyond their academic pursuits and may conflict with their studies (Sweitzer, 2009). These responsibilities may make moving an undesirable option, if an option at all. Consideration need also be given to the impact of technology and the role of distance learning. The increasing number of graduate programs being offered by correspondence and/or online warrants such a discussion; the flexibility of such programs is certainly an incentive for potential students who are less willing or able to relocate due to family, career or other external commitments. The graduate student experience in distance education has been a relatively unexplored area as of yet (see Hildebrandt, 2011; Park, Perry, & Edwards, 2011) and further research is needed.

Enrolment status.

Tinto (1975) notes the difference between part time and full time stu-

dents, and the extent to which one is able to be involved in the academic and social life of student and faculty communities. Bean and Metzner (1985) include this variable in their model of non-traditional student attrition to refer to the number of academic credits for which a student is enrolled; used to define a student as having part-time or full-time status. It is considered here as a possible factor in graduate student persistence as it is speculated to have an indirect effect through goal commitments on the extent to which students are able to integrate, both socially and academically, within the program and/or the institution.

Graduate Student Experiences

College attrition research has historically been framed within one of two theoretical models (Titus, 2004). Tinto (1975) hypothesizes that a lack of social interaction with others and 'insufficient congruency' with the values of the college will lead students to have a low commitment to the social system and thus increase the chance of dropout. Tinto (1993) later extended his theory of undergraduate persistence to include doctoral persistence. His model implies that successful socialization results in persistence. Bean (1980) presents a causal model of student attrition at the undergraduate level. While the findings suggest that men and women drop out of university for different reasons, institutional commitment- a variable that will be explored below, was the most influential in explaining dropout for both sexes. Research indicates that that both theories "are correct in presuming that college persistence is the product of a complex set of interactions among personal and institutional factors as well as in presuming that Intent to Persist is the outcome of the successful match between the student and the institution" (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, and Hengstler, 1992, p.158).

Goal commitments.

Several models of student attrition have included goal commitments as a variable (Bean, 1980; Cabrera et al., 1992; Cabrera et al., 1993). In these models, goal commitments have referred to the completion of an academic program and the attainment of a degree. In the model presented here, it is acknowledged that graduate students have other goal commitments that are tied to personal, institutional, and career values, and may or may not be in congruence with educational goals or expectations, though their connection to other variables is acknowledged.

Job search.

This variable is included in the model presented here as being directly linked with career values and goal commitments, and is seen as an essential component of the transition pathway through graduate school. As has been noted above, graduate students may re-enter the system after many years of working and may already have established a career. In this case, the choice to return to school may be for the purpose of career advancement, a career change, or indicate a desire to meet a personal goal. Other graduate students may be aiming to complete an advanced degree that will make them more competitive in the job market. Ultimately, it is assumed that graduate school is linked in some way, to employment. The job search may be ongoing throughout graduate education or be initiated near the end of the program, in the "moving on" phase, as the student prepares to transition out of graduate school and into a career (Polson, 2003).

Psychosocial development.

Psychosocial theories of development look at "the important issues people face as their lives progress, such as how to define themselves, their relationships with others, and what to do with their lives." (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p.32). It is noted that environmental conditions such as an institution's size and type, articulation and adherence to mission, and teaching styles are also factors in psychosocial development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Dunn & Forney, 2004). Gardner (2009) acknowledges that psychosocial development is at work throughout all phases of the doctoral student experience, as the student gains competence in the subject matter and establishes a professional identity. The same may be said of Master's degree students.

Social identity development.

Social identity development looks at "*what* students think about their specific social identity and *how* they think about it", and includes notions of identity related to gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, ability and disability, and religion, as well as how these identities intersect (McEwen, 2005, p.13). The direct link between social identity development and background factors, including personal attributes, can thus be seen, and is indicated in the model presented here.

Cognitive structural development.

According to models of cognitive structural development, student success consists of the acquisition of advanced capacities, including critical thinking, decision-making, and conceptual understanding (Strange, 2010). Gardner (2009) notes that graduate students experience cognitive development as they complete their coursework and gain research experience. A direct link is drawn in the model presented here between cognitive structural development and academic integration.

Internal influences.

Astin (1984) notes that increased rates of undergraduate program completion may be attributed to increased levels of student involvement. Gardner and Barnes (2007) examine the role of graduate student involvement in socialization and as preparation for a professional career. They refer to Tinto's (1993) model of doctoral persistence, and his focus on academic and social integration. These factors have been discussed by numerous researchers in the context of student attrition and persistence at the graduate level (see Ethington & Smart, 1986; Mullen, Goyette, & Soares, 2003) and are included as essential factors to be considered in the development of a transition model of graduate students.

Academic integration. Mullen, Goyette, and Soares (2003) define academic integration as a student's academic involvement in his or her institution. This involvement may be formal or informal, and includes activities such as courses and seminars, con-

ferences and presentations, and scholarly writing. At the doctoral stage, the student may be most academically involved with his or her supervisor and doctoral committee members, and less with one's peers and colleagues. The advisor or mentor role has been linked in previous research to student satisfaction, success, and persistence (Golde, 2005; Zhao, Golde & McCormick, 2005).

Social integration. Social integration refers to the extent of a student's involvement in relationships with peers and college faculty (Mullen, Goyette, and Soares, 2003). It may include activities such as orientation, 'socials' and informal writing or thesis support groups. Tinto (1993) acknowledges that at the graduate level, social integration is closely linked with academic integration. Interestingly, there is no evidence to suggest that social integration affects the institutional commitment of older students at the undergraduate level (Braxton & Hirschy, 2004; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Further research should reveal whether this holds for graduate students as well.

External influences.

Tinto (1993) acknowledges that students also belong to other "external communities", such as family and work; these external influences can also affect integration and may also play a role in a student's decision to either stay in college or dropout. Demands of external communities may result in limited involvement in communities of the department. With reference to Bean (1983; 1990), Titus (2004) refers to these external influences as environmental pull variables, such as a lack of financial resources, relationships, opportunities for transfer, employment and family responsibilities, and acknowledges that these may affect a student's decision to leave a college. These variables may have a particular influence at the graduate level, as an increasingly number of students may be described as non-traditional, and as Bean and Metzner (1985) discovered, these students seem to be more affected by the external environment than by a lack of social integration, which is known to affect

traditional student attrition.

Conversely, external factors may have a positive influence on graduate student persistence. Sweitzer (2009) examined the positive effects of relationships established outside of the academy on professional identity development. Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) find support for Bean's suggestion that environmental factors (such as support from significant others) be considered in studies of persistence; hence it is included in the model presented here.

Psychological outcomes.

In their conceptual model of nontraditional student attrition, Bean and Metzner (1985) include psychological outcomes (utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress) as being most directly influenced by academic and environmental (described here as external) variables, as well as by background and defining variables. They draw a possible link to social integration. In the model presented here, a direct link is drawn between psychosocial development (itself arising as a result of both academic and social integration and support) and psychological outcomes. These factors play an important role in students' decision-making process of whether to stay or to go.

Decisions.

While an extensive body of literature has attempted to explain the stages in students' post-secondary decision-making (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2006; Ross, 2010), these student choice models focus exclusively on undergraduate students and limit their analysis to entry into the post-secondary system and not departure from it. Further research in this area is needed, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Leaving Graduate School

Departure from a graduate program may arise under a myriad of conditions, as we have seen, but we must be careful not to assume that all departures are a failure- of the student, the department, institution, or the system. Certainly, any number of outcomes may accompany the transition out of graduate school.

We consider below three of the most likely outcomes.

Degree completion.

Graduation is recognized as an important transition, often described with ritualistic connotations. Retention rates at the graduate level, however, are disappointingly low in the United States and Canada. In the United States, only about half of all doctoral students entering their programs will complete the degree (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Gardner, 2009). It is important to note, however, that not all institutions compile information on attrition rates, and due to a lack of a universal graduate student tracking system, it cannot easily be determined how many of these 'non-completers' are actually incorrectly labelled as such, such as those who transferred to another program or institution or interrupted their studies, such as through an extended leave of absence, only to return at a later date (see Golde, 2005 for a discussion of such attriters). The number of graduate students who actually complete their degree may thus be higher than statistics indicate.

Transfer.

The tracking of graduate student persistence and attrition at either the departmental or institutional level has not been well documented in Canada or the United States, and it is difficult to speculate the number of graduate students whose educational careers are characterized by path diversions and alternative pathways, such as program, department, and institutional transfers. There is an emerging literature on undergraduate transfer (see Junor & Usher, 2008), and as Ehrenberg, Zuckerman, Groen, and Brucker (2010) acknowledge, it has long been known that many students who initially enrol as undergraduates transfer and complete degrees at other institutions. Critics of high PhD attrition rates note that this may also be the case for doctoral students. This emphasizes the importance of institutional commitment and integration in persistence, as well as the importance of considering academic transfers when studying graduate student attrition.

Departure.

About half of those students who enter a graduate program in the United States will not finish (Council of Graduate Schools, 2008). Chances are only slightly better for those students enrolled at a Canadian university. Prompted to explore the issue as a result of her own experiences and departure from two doctoral programs, Lovitts (2001) brought to the forefront the myriad of factors that influence the decision to drop out, many of which have been addressed here in this discussion.

Transition Pathways After Graduate School

Several models have been developed detailing various stages through which doctoral students pass en route to academic and professional careers (Gardner, 2009; Sweitzer 2009; Tinto, 1993), but Master's students remain absent from much of this literature. Considered below are three pathways available to those who depart from graduate students, regardless of outcome.

Academic career transitions.

Traditionally, the pathway of the doctoral student typically culminated with an academic appointment as a university professor or researcher. As a result of a recent economic downturn, and an arguable over-supply of new Ph.D. graduates, the chances of these graduates actually securing a tenure-track faculty position are not as promising as they once were; in some disciplines, particularly humanities, the situation is rather bleak (Benton, 2009; 2010; Conn, 2010; Leach, 2011). Nonetheless, the road to an academic career continues to be the chosen path of many graduates, and is encouraged by faculty. While a doctorate is typically required for most tenure track positions, an increasing number of ABD's (those doctoral students who have completed all program requirements except for the dissertation) seek and find employment as college and university lecturers and administrators.

Non-academic career transitions.

The transition to a non-academic career is a likely outcome for those ending their educational journey with a Master's degree, and increasingly the case for those exiting with a Doctorate in hand (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2002, as cited in Elgar, 2003). It has been argued that more support is needed for those headed for this career path (Lehker & Furlong, 2006; Polson, 2003). Those who aspire to, and are encouraged to seek an academic position may be being led astray, and many graduate students and faculty have an unrealistic view of the job market (Golde, 2005).

Further education.

For some, the transition out of graduate school may be delayed, or followed by re-entry into the post-secondary system, as a result of the desire or need (dependent on career goals and expectations) to acquire further credentials. The educational pathway may thus be longer for some than others. Those who complete or leave a Master's or professional degree program may opt to continue on to a Doctoral program or enrol in continuing education or professional development courses to attain certifications that may complement the graduate degree and provide a practical component to their training.

Summary

A theoretical model of graduate student transitions has been presented here, based on an extensive review of the literature and an adaptation of models developed to explain undergraduate student experiences of access, persistence, and attrition. The model proposed in this paper aims to contribute to the discussion of graduate student transitions, with the hope that as further research continues, a better understanding of the various educational pathways student take will be reached.

The model depicted here includes factors believed to be most influential in the decision to enrol in graduate school, outlines the transitions and components of socialization that characterize the phases of graduate study, including factors that may effect decisions of whether or not to persist, and concludes with a brief discussion of the possible outcomes that may result as students transition out of graduate school and on with their lives. While it is acknowledged that the factors identified here are in no way exhaustive of the many concerns and issues graduate students face in gaining entry, persisting and departing from their studies at the highest levels of post-secondary education, it is hoped that this model will stimulate further discussion and prompt examination of the most influential factors that help to shape their experiences and decisions.

This paper, and the model accompanying it, may be seen as a preliminary exploration of the graduate student experience, and as such, is limited in scope to the findings of previous research, much of it based on undergraduate students. Further research is thus needed to explore whether the factors identified here are indeed influential in enrolment and persistence in graduate education, and to determine whether these factors differ by level of program and/or discipline. Contextual differences between countries with regards to graduate education must also be considered and acknowledged. As undergraduate and graduate program enrolments continue to rise, more information is needed on student demographics, as well as the factors that work both together and separately to steer students onto and through the various educational pathways that come to shape their future career decisions and ultimately, their lives.

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Job Development for Today - A Sector Specific Approach

Habib Ullah
ACCES Employment

Abstract

Job Developers and Career Practitioners promote job seekers to employers in order to help them find meaningful employment. Because of today's complexity in the labour-market and specificity of job requirements, the task of job developers is getting more complicated. So, a sector specific approach may help Job Developers understand the needs of the labour market and lead them towards success in assisting job seekers find jobs. In order to build effective client promotion strategies, Job Developers need to clearly understand the current trends in the labour market, and then try to match their clients' skills with the requirements of the vacant jobs. Once this match is successfully made, they can start promoting job seekers to the employers. This article has been prepared on the basis of experience obtained as a Job Developer and Project Coordinator of a bridging program for internationally educated engineers called "Engineering Connections", which ACCES Employment has been running for over 4 years. This article reveals how a sector-specific job development approach can help Job Developers match job seekers' skills with the labour market requirements, and eventually promote them to the employers.

Every year embraces a large number of immigrants who eventually integrate into Canadian workforce and contribute to the economic growth of the country. greeted 247,202 permanent residents in the year 2008 which was well inside the government's intended range of 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents for the year. Further 79,459 foreign students and 193,061 temporary foreign workers resulted in a collective total of 519,722 newcomers in for the year 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). It is predictable that will greet between 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents in 2011 (Canada Immigration Plan 2011, 2010). It is often challenging for many of these immigrants to find professional jobs in the Canadian labour market because of various barriers including cultural shock, language, lack of labour market information, inability to promote marketable skills, unrecognized foreign credentials etc.

A number of not-for-profit organizations are delivering various government funded programs to help internationally educated professionals find meaningful jobs in Canada. While Employment Consultants in the not-for-profit industry are providing employment preparation services to these newcomers, Job Developers are continuously promoting their clients as well as their services to local employers - which often results in helping internationally educated professionals find jobs in specific sectors. Traditionally job development involved a general approach of offering services to newcomers without focusing on occupational specifications; however, with an increased number of clients demanding access to specific sectors, it has become imperative that a sector-specific approach should be formulated for job development. Responding to this need, a number of not-for-profit organizations in the GTA have launched sector specific bridging programs for internationally educated newcomers. This involves skilled immigrants' completing in-class training and work placements to bridge their prior education and work experience so they meet the requirements to practice within their professions in (hireimmigrants.ca, 2010). To name a few - ACCES Employment, Skills for Change, Microskills, JVS and also some community colleges and universities like Humber, Seneca, Ryerson are offering bridge-to-work programs for internationally educated professionals in various sectors including engineering, finance, accounting, HR, sales and marketing etc.

Successful job development needs to be comprised of a structured, step by step approach. To succeed, the professional development should be integrated in a progressive approach that is well-structured. It's a true/real reflexive practice because a combination of technical knowledge and basic scientific principles apply to the activities of vocations assessment and evaluation, job analysis, and contract development (Bissonnette, 1994). For promoting internationally educated newcomers to local employers, the JD (Job Developer) must first determine necessary steps or the process, and then formulate strategies for promoting clients in the local market.

A Sector-specific Job Development Process

In order to be able to promote internationally educated newcomers to the Canadian labour market a JD needs to follow the below outlined process:

A. Steps so that the training/education given to professionals trained out of the country has support/help from a sector-based approach provides/gives results

Following are two essential steps of job development for promoting an internationally educated professional in a particular sector:

1. **Identify clients' sector-specific skills**

- Internationally educated professionals bring a variety of hard and soft skills specific to different sectors. Each Canadian sector looks for specific hard skills. Following are some examples of sector specific hard skills:

- Engineering: Design skills using AutoCAD, Solid Works, PLC programming, Primavera

- Accounting: ACCPAC, Simply Accounting, Quick Books

- Information Technology: C +, .Net, SQL, SAP

Clients' skills can often be identified in workshop settings, through one-on-one counseling, resume reviews, etc. Mock interviews, technical presentations, and role playing can also be used for identifying clients' skills. For example – a Workshop Facilitator or JD may simply ask the clients to introduce themselves focusing on their professional experience and technical skills. During mock interviews, the interviewer may ask questions about hard skills, or may provide opportunities for clients to describe their relevant skills during technical presentations or role playing. A JD may also learn about clients' skills by asking questions relating to specific hard skills.

2. Match clients' skills with job requirements

At this stage the JD needs to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the specific sectors for matching clients' skills with job requirements. Before beginning the matching process, the JD should already be aware of the skills that comprise the client pool, so this process can start only after the clients' skills have been identified.

Understand the labour market: The JD also needs to understand the labour market, industry standards, and current situation in terms of trends of the specific industry, and most importantly – vacancies with employers in the sector in order to be able to start matching clients' skills with position requirements. While researching jobs for Mechanical Designers, the JD should determine demand for this role in the labour market. The JD needs to know which industries are looking for designers, for example – automotive, aerospace, metal fabrication, manufacturing etc. Again, the JD needs to take into consideration other relevant factors in terms of how the automotive industry is doing, whether there are any aerospace companies operating in the GTA, and finally – whether these industries are hiring or not. The JD should also check what type of mechanical designing skills are in demand in the industry, for example whether the employers are looking for Solid Works, Catia, Pro En-

gineering or other similar skills.

Obtain information: Details relating to job requirements can be obtained by checking job postings and company websites, reading professional journals, newspapers and periodicals and also by directly contacting employers. However, in order to do the latter, the JD should work to build an effective relationship with the employer first.

Understand clients' experience: The JD requires understanding that in addition to hard skills, the employers look for relevant experience and education/training. Usually the employers tend to be specific in terms of relevant experience. They not only ask for similar experience, but also experience in the same industry. Sometimes they ask for experience in using a particular type of machine or software. For example, when an employer is looking for an engineer with piping design experience – they may get very specific by indicating that the candidate needs to have experience in the oil and gas industry and skills in P & ID (Piping and Instrumentation Design). Similarly, sometimes an employer may look for an electrical en-

labour market. For example – some Asian countries are ahead of in the field of telecommunications. So, candidates coming from those countries tend to be in great demand in Canadian telecom companies. Similarly, lacks engineers with transportation background. So, internationally educated civil engineers with experience in transportation may have great potential in .

B. Build a Client Promotion Strategy

Once a JD finds suitable clients for any particular organization, the next step will be to formulate a strategy for promoting the clients effectively to the employer. It is very important for the JD to interest employers in respective programs (for example – bridging programs) and also to interest employers in the programs' clients. With the words we speak we must inform, educate, inspire, communicate value, express enthusiasm and demonstrate good judgment (p. 165, Bissonnette, 1994). The picture/design/image of figure 1 below can help to understand the necessary tasks associated with successful promotion:
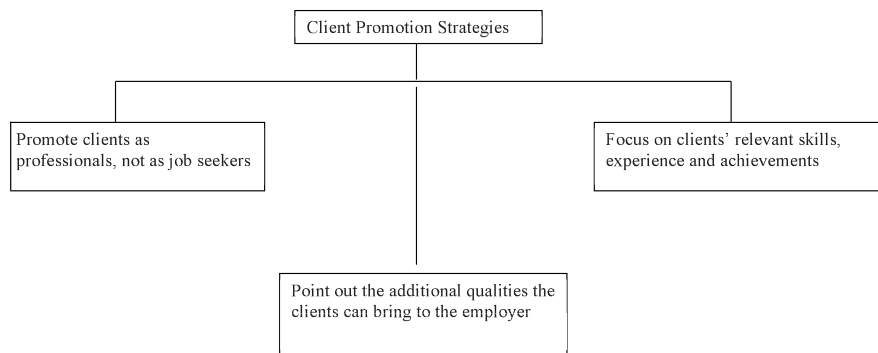
Figure 1. Successful Client Promotion

gineer with experience in using PLC programming either in Allan Bradley, or Siemens.

It is very important that prior to sending any resumes the JD confirms that the candidate fulfills all the above requirements. Sometimes it is easier to promote clients whose skills are in demand, but in low supply in the Canadian

1. 1. Promote clients as professionals, not as job seekers: We know that employers have needs for skilled professionals and we have clients with necessary education, skills and experience. Now we need to connect these clients with the labour market. When promoting

clients, we need to address clients' professional competence rather than promoting them as internationally educated professionals. For example, when we promote an accounting professional, we need to focus on the client's professional qualities as they match job requirements, rather than telling the employer that the client had a good career in their home country and now she/he is looking for a relevant job in . Fortunately a large number of internationally educated professionals now hold important positions with various Canadian organizations, and they are quite aware of the competence of internationally educated professionals. They tend to be open to these types of candidates despite the fact that these candidates don't have Canadian experience.

1. 2 Focus on clients' relevant skills, experience and achievements**:** This refers to the common theme of targeting and customizing a client's resume, but can also be used for promoting the client to the employer. The employers always want the client to have experience in the same industry, in a similar environment, and with industry-specific software/technologies. For example, if we have a client who we are promoting to a construction firm for a GO transit extension project, we can say that our client has civil engineering project management experience, combined with past experience in railway construction projects.

1. 3. Point out the additional qualities that clients can bring to the employers: Employers are approached by many people from programs like ours in the course of a year, so it is crucial to tell the employer what will be different about working with you (p. 177, Bissonnette, 1994). We can try to promote clients to employers emphasizing the additional skills that the clients hold. For example – when an employer is looking for a telecom professional with some experience in wireless networking,

we can also highlight other relevant experience. Moreover, when a client has experience with advanced technology in another country – the experience may benefit the Canadian employer. There is a common theme in sales and marketing literature: People do not buy features, they buy benefits (p. 178, Bissonnette, 1994). Although over-qualification is considered a barrier for foreign trained professionals in , sometimes this can also be promoted as an additional qualification. For example - a mechanical engineer may have bachelor level education in mechanical engineering, but a specialized education in Computational Fluid Dynamics during master level studies may benefit some employers. In 2008, 42% of immigrant workers aged 25 to 54 had a higher level of education than their job required, while 28% of Canadian-born workers were similarly over-qualified. Regardless of period of landing, immigrants had higher shares of over-qualification (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/091123/dq091123b-eng.htm, Study: Quality of employment in the Canadian immigrant labour market). This over-qualification can be presented to the employer in a way which views it as an additional strength.

A sector specific job development approach will not only be effective for bridging programs, but for any programs dealing with internationally educated professionals. All the JD needs to do is determine the professional affiliation of each client, research the labour market and finally, follow through the steps of promoting internationally educated professionals. This approach will not only help the JD learn more about the labour market and industrial details of different sectors, but also help gain employers' trust. The JD will talk their language as a result of becoming familiarized with the sector through this strategic job development process.

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Creating Hope, Opportunity, and Results for Disadvantaged Youth

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

Abstract

This paper recounts the development of the Pathways to Education Program from its origins in the Regent Park community of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Program was conceived in 2000 as a response to the seeming intractable and longstanding problem of high school dropouts in one of Canada's most economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse communities. In the first section, the authors recount the development of the Program. Section Two documents the Program's remarkable success in significantly reducing the dropout rate and increasing post-secondary participation through the provision of comprehensive, community-based supports. The final section offers lessons first about the Program itself and, second, about possible implications for other social innovations. The Program's success has led to its replication in other low-income communities across Canada.

As Pathways to Education (Pathways) enters its second decade, it seemed like an appropriate time to reflect on its origins, achievements and lessons. As one of two founding funders, the Counselling Foundation of Canada helped unleash a powerful social innovation which has the ability to change the lives of youth in our lowest income communities; youth whose life chances have historically been so severely limited. Over the course of the creation of the Pathways program along with implementation and replication, we have had precious little time to publish some of the key findings, both results and lessons. This is an important moment to do both as Pathways develops in new ways and takes new directions.

The following paper is organized in three broad sections. The first describes the background and context for the development of the initial Pathways to Education Program in the Regent Park community of Toronto. The second part outlines the principal results and achievements of Pathways young people, providing data covering the past decade including both Regent Park as well as the second generation communities which have replicated the Program. The final part offers some lessons learned from Pathways' first decade focusing on lessons regarding the Program itself (and relevant to other youth development initiatives), as well as offering some lessons from our experiences with Pathways as a social innovation which, hopefully, will be of value to those considering other innovations to address similarly complex challenges in other communities.

Part I: Background, Context and Development of Pathways

The Canadian Council on Learning (2006) tells us that by 2013, up to 70% of all jobs will require post-secondary education. Therefore, a major challenge is how to ensure that capable young people from poor communities, "first generation" youth and aboriginal Canadians can access post-secondary education.[1] The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Fund (2009) has shown that these are the groups who have historically lacked access. This challenge was well understood in 2000 in developing the Pathways to Education Program in Regent Park. The high school drop-out rate for the wealthiest communities in Toronto is 5% to 13% (e.g. TDSB 2009) while youth in Canada's lowest income communities are dropping out of high schools at outrageous rates in excess of 50% to 60%. Since the 1960s policy makers, educators and governments have struggled to solve this problem. The Pathways to Education Program has had some important success in addressing this seemingly intractable problem through social innovation.

Pathways to Education is a community-based, youth-at-risk initiative developed in one of the poorest communities in downtown Toronto, Canada which helps youth in low-income, urban communities complete and succeed in high school by providing various forms of academic, social, financial and advocacy supports.

The origins and development of the Pathways to Education Program stem from the experience of failure for the majority of young people in the community. Regent Park is the oldest and largest public housing development in Canada and continues to be one of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the city of Toronto. The challenges faced by this community are many: low incomes, (the 2001 Canadian Census revealed that the median household income for Regent Park was approximately $17,000 -with neighbouring Moss Park the lowest in the GTA - compared to approximately $54,000 for Toronto households as a whole), high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, and a large proportion of single-parent families.[2] In particular, the challenge of the experience of failure was at the root of community concern dating from the 1960s. Indeed, a high rate of youth dropouts and a growing achievement gap among minority and low income youth was and perhaps continues to be viewed as an intractable problem comparable to the longstanding challenges of Aboriginal communities in Canada.

While working at the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC), we [authors Carolyn Acker, Executive Director and Norman Rowen, Director Pathways to Education] founded the Pathways to Education Program. At the time we didn't think of ourselves as social entrepreneurs. We were working hard to break the cycle of poverty and implement the Centre's vision of "com-

munity succession": that the young people growing up in the community would become the future doctors, nurses, social workers, community development workers and administrators of the Centre. Ten years later, we reduced the dropout rate by 70% and increased post-secondary participation four fold.

In 1992, the RPCHC primarily offered medical, dental, and nursing services. It was during the early nineties that the Board of the Health Centre expressed its desire to be more than "a clinic". They believed that, in order to improve the health of the community, they needed to engage in health promotion and community development strategies. After development of a strategic plan in 1993, the next few years were spent growing the Health Center's capacity in health promotion and community development. It was also during this period that we began to witness the rapid deterioration of the Regent Park community. Through the nineties, the Health Centre's budget grew from approximately $2.5 million to $6.5 million. Our services and programs expanded to meet the changing needs, encompassing everything from a strong Early Years program to growing community gardens, working with the community and police on safety issues, fostering community development and capacity-building and advocacy on housing issues and shelter for the homeless. Yet, as we were struggling to meet the needs of the community, the violence continued to increase. We witnessed young men involved in gangs, along with drug dealing, assault and murder from the increasing use of hand guns. The atmosphere in the community was one of hopelessness and the youth involved in these activities were getting younger and younger. We knew we weren't getting at the root cause and we felt as though the services of the Health Centre were more of a community band aid rather than a strategy to break the cycle of poverty. We were desperate to find a solution to the distress and despair engulfing the community.

In 1995 Carolyn, and two others from the RPCHC, attended the first International Community Health Centre Conference held at the Centre for Health Care Reform in Montreal, and heard a presentation by Dr. H. Jack

Geiger. Dr. Geiger presented on a community health centre he was instrumental in founding in rural Mississippi. The community was steeped in racial segregation. A video presentation showed people picking cotton, living in sub-standard housing with inadequate water and little hope for the future. Geiger launched a community health centre there in 1965 under the sponsorship of Tufts Medical School in Boston. Along with the primary care clinical services they were providing, he and his team introduced a variety of programs, including after-school programs, college and university preparation courses, as well as economic development initiatives that ultimately provided youth with employment opportunities to break out of poverty and some became health care professionals serving their community from the community health centre.[3] After listening to the story unfold we were told that a young woman who grew up in the community obtained her Master's degree and she was now the CEO of this Health Centre and that four young boys from this community were poised to graduate from medical school and were going back to their community to provide health services. Needless to say we were awed by this experience and brought the idea back as a way of actually breaking the cycle of poverty and handing over ownership of the Health Centre to the community. Staff and board were galvanized by the idea and, during the 1996 board/staff strategic planning retreat, we were inspired to create our own audacious vision of "community succession".

RPCHC is grounded in an understanding of the importance of community ownership. In fact, community ownership is a fundamental value of the RPCHC. Nothing was more important to the achievement of the vision of "community succession" than engaging the community. The Centre's mission statement commits it to involving community members in decision-making and in designing and running programs. In 1996-97, the RPCHC began a process of exploring with the community what achieving the vision of "community succession" would mean. How could the community help its children become the leaders and professionals of the Regent Park of the future? It's important to

remember that at this stage we had no idea that we would create the high impact, social innovation, we named Pathways to Education. We wanted to break the cycle of poverty and knew that the identification of the obstacles and solutions must be driven by the community. It took about three years before the concept for the Pathways to Education Program was fully developed. The vision is not a vision about program implementation or reform of the education system. The point may seem obvious, but many program models are driven by purposes that are more relevant to the professionals involved in delivering them. The Health Centre's vision flowed from the community, and the Pathways program was developed and implemented with the youth of the community as its focus.

In 1997, the vehicle or structure used to engage the community in the visioning process was the Community Succession Task Force. Later, based on the work of the Task Force, a Steering Committee was formed. Residents from the community played a major role alongside members of the RPCHC Board and staff, including the Executive Director. There was also representation from other local agencies and organizations. Records from one of the early "community succession" focus groups in 1999 indicate that residents were keenly aware of the need for people from Regent Park to feel respected and part of the process. They were asked how to ensure that non-resident members would not dominate the project's development. Among their suggestions were: facilitation of discussions; putting a resident in the chair's role; inviting youth to participate; and coaching for resident participants so they would not be intimidated by the language and style of professionals. All of these suggestions became part of the subsequent activities and processes from which the Pathways to Education Program grew.

A number of strategies were used to engage in a community dialogue in Regent Park, but it is important to understand the context in which the Health Centre was operating. Throughout the early nineties the RPCHC had demonstrated a long-term commitment to the community by developing community strengths, working hand-in-hand with residents who had taken leadership and

staff roles in the organization, recognizing and building upon community assets and bringing in resources from outside the community, collaborating and partnering with other community agencies and institutions to build community capacity, and advocating for the community. Some specific strategies used by the "community succession" project in Regent Park included: a survey of community residents to gather information, meetings with people who are seen as role models for Regent Park youth, focus groups with parents from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in their first language, interviews and focus groups with young people who had graduated, who were still in school, or who had dropped out of high school, a staff survey at the Regent Park Community Health Centre, informal community soundings, and meetings with staff from local elementary schools and local agencies. To support some of these strategies, people who spoke languages other than English were needed to communicate with some residents; therefore, members of the community were hired and received training on how to conduct focus groups and had input into their design. We needed seed funding to pursue development of the vision because staff at the RPCHC did not have time on top of their normal duties to do this work. In 1999, a major milestone for the "community succession" project occurred when RPCHC received seed funding from the Counselling Foundation of Canada to further develop its ideas and create a multi-year funding proposal.

By engaging the community and sharing the vision of "community succession" with them through focus groups, and by working in a collaborative process with community members and other community based agencies, we elicited the community's input so we could develop a proposal to realize the vision. One thing that became very clear from the focus group data was how deeply parents cared about their children's future, and how interested they were in actions that would help their children succeed in the school system, and ultimately the workforce. Focus groups and interviews with youth revealed that a significant number of youth in the community had lost hope for the future. Even those who were

doing well in high school had very low expectations of being able to obtain student grants or loans and go on to post-secondary studies. The funding proposal that was developed through this process represented a variety of activities to implement the vision. The proposal was also the culmination of a great deal of work on the part of Centre staff, board and a consultant in nurturing funder confidence. The main components consisted of a number of mentoring activities and supported access to education, training and volunteer opportunities for adults and for older youth who had dropped out of high school. At this stage we were looking at a symptom - youth and adults without skills or preparation for employment - though we thought we were looking at the problem. We were still not clearly seeing the systemic issues contributing to the problem. The action research process that followed in 2000 illuminated the systemic issues which needed to be addressed as the root of the problem

At the end of 1999, after a year and a half of negotiations with two foundations, the Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we were granted funding based on a proposal comprised of the previously articulated program ideas that we believed could achieve the vision, none of which were the Pathways to Education Program. Achieving this vision was a daunting challenge we gladly took on because we were propelled by our passion for social justice. This was just the beginning of financial support to realize the community's vision, but without the initial support of these two founding partners, the Program would never have been developed and implemented.

Throughout the process of design and implementation many people told us we would be unsuccessful. An innovative approach to tackle the intractable problem of high school drop outs in low income communities was imperative. Not only was this extremely difficult because of the complexity and intransigence of the problem, but we also had to deal with resistance from many cynics and naysayers as we developed Pathways and fund-raised to sustain the work. Another complication arose when Ontario elected the Harris Conservatives in 1995. The cuts made by that

government included a 22% reduction in social assistance to families, effective loss of transportation subsidies for low income students in the former City of Toronto (after the amalgamation of the several school boards), loss of rent controls, and more psychiatric bed and hospital closures. We revisited our funders to explain that the floor had been pulled out from under the families we were working with which would make the vision that much harder to achieve.

By early 2000, job descriptions were being drafted, including one for Director of the Community Succession Project who was hired in the spring. (By 2001, the innovation was developed and this role evolved into the Director of Pathways to Education). In 2000, the year we began to research how we might implement our vision which resulted in the creation of Pathways to Education, there were nine murders in the community, and there was a palpable sense of despair. The parents in the community, of all cultures, feared for their children's safety, and feared for their future. Yet they wanted the same things for their kids as middle class parents. And they knew what our research would bear out; that we had a serious problem with young people who weren't finishing high school. Our research uncovered a dropout rate of 56%, fully twice the City of Toronto average. And for the children of single parents, and immigrants it was more than 70%.[4] On seeing these data, we were overwhelmed. It strengthened our resolve to address the tragic underachievement of so many of our young people.

Launched in September 2001, the Program was developed in the preceding year using an "action research" framework to elicit the community's experiences and perceptions of barriers faced in education and employment, coupled with a review of best practices from related programs. The process was guided by and built upon the solid foundation of community development outlined above, an action research methodology, a results-driven focus, and a passion for breaking the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that had engulfed the community for so long. We created Pathways by engaging the community in this action research process, along with community based agencies

and local schools. After listening to parents, schools, agencies and dozens of young people themselves, graduates and dropouts alike, we learned that the barriers to success were not things that could be addressed solely within the schools. The Pathways program was designed to overcome many of these risk factors, the most serious of which are clearly based in the community including poverty, lack of academic and social support, and a longstanding culture of failure.[5]

Challenges Pathways Needed to Address

There are a number of barriers which were initially identified through the development of the Pathways to Education Program. Additionally, the Program's evolution over the past decade, coupled with more recent research, enabled us to address additional challenges faced by Pathways' young people.

Initial Understandings

Four main barriers were identified in 2000 through extensive focus group discussions, individual interviews and research on best practices leading to the development of the four key Pathways supports.

Poverty. As a principal feature of Regent Park, the reality of low income asserts itself for residents and their families in multiple ways. Related to Pathways, the lack of transportation subsidies, coupled with the lack of a local high school, necessitated consideration of a direct financial support. This has taken the form of transit tickets for Regent Park Pathways youth based on their school attendance. The cost of this support, however, may be seen to be "offset" by the Program's design which utilizes this direct financial support to ensure contact with Program staff and the development of more direct accountability by the students.

A second aspect of the effects of poverty as an obstacle to success was the deeply held conviction that, if young people were to graduate high school, they believed the cost of post-secondary education was clearly beyond their reach. The Pathways scholarship was designed to directly address this barrier.

Beginning in 2005, the Provincial government amended the processes and requirements under the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) to provide grants, rather than only loans, for those with the lowest family incomes, for first year tuition and half of second year tuition. This has allowed Pathways more limited financial support to be applied to costs not covered by the tuition grant (e.g. ancillary fees, books, residence costs outside Toronto, etc.), or simply applied to tuition in second and later years.

Perhaps the more striking aspect of the longer term financial support is its profound effect on high school achievement. This positive effect is specifically the change in perspective which results from the logic that many young people identified prior to Pathways; namely, that if you don't believe you can go on to college or university, it doesn't matter if you finish high school. Therefore, the promise of support at the post-secondary level allows young people to address their internalized pessimism – an attitude which was regrettably reinforced by others' perceptions (the stigma of the community) and which was itself exemplified by individual and collective failure to complete high school.

Poverty and risk. There is much evidence concerning the factors which place students at risk, and considerable agreement that risk is far from a random occurrence.

> The deleterious effect of poverty on education has been well known for centuries. Thirty years of careful social science has provided overwhelming evidence that socioeconomic status (SES) has been and continues to be the best single predictor of how much schooling students will obtain, how well they will do at their studies, and what their life prospects beyond school are. Much Canadian research confirms poverty's negative influence on students' behaviour, achievement, and retention in school (Levin 1995: 212)

> SES continues to be the strongest predictor of educational outcomes, as it has been since it came into

prominence as a research issue more than 30 years ago. Almost all educational outcomes, such as initial reading achievement, referrals to special education, discipline and behaviour problems, years of education completed, and grades achieved are strongly correlated with family income… Childhood SES is the strongest single predictor of long-term income and educational achievement. Other major life outcomes such as longevity, health status, criminal activity, propensity to political involvement, and so on have also been linked to childhood socio-economic status. In every case, low family income is strongly associated with poorer outcomes, a finding that has remained extraordinarily robust in the research and applies in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom… (Levin and Riffel 2000:184)

Commissioned research on Ontario dropouts (Fergusson et al, 2005) concluded that the determinants of risk include both school-based and non-school (i.e. community-based) factors which, in itself, suggests that school-based interventions by themselves are extremely unlikely to be effective, a conclusion supported in a review of Canadian research (Levin, 2005).

While the extent – and consistency – of the relationship between educational attainment and SES is clear, the contribution of other factors is far less so. Some of the risk factors identified by Ferguson et al (2005) as "nonschool" factors are strongly associated with poverty and its concentration in communities; for example, immigration and settlement, moves/interruptions, social isolation, assumption of adult roles, and minority status are all present in the most impoverished and challenged communities and, more important, are the lived experience of the youth in these communities.

Given the above, there is also reason to ask the relative role of school factors. While there is somewhat more conflicting evidence, it is clear that such factors, after controlling for background, account for much less of the variance in educational attainment. This

understanding is augmented by findings from several studies. For example, in a review of research, Raptis and Fleming (2003) noted that community and background factors have a far greater impact on achievement than school-based factors, citing work showing 50-60% of the variance in achievement is based on background factors compared to 5-6% from school-based factors.

None of the above discussion is offered to suggest that efforts to improve schooling are irrelevant; rather, it is to note that "the negative impact of poverty on all education and life outcomes is well known, yet the issue does not seem to occupy as important a place in educational policy or practice as its effects would suggest." (Levin and Riffel 2000:183). It is, rather, that educational policy and programs, to be effective, would appear to require attention to poverty and to "community-based" rather than solely "school-based" approaches. As Levin noted: "One of the striking aspects of education reform, however, has been the lack of attention to the most important single determinant of educational outcomes — socio-economic status (SES) of families" (ibid.184). Pathways was intentionally designed to shift the lens from a singular focus on the school environment, to a broader focus on the community as a whole, inclusive of its schools. This was a driving force behind the design of the Pathways program.

The need for academic support and the challenge of the curriculum. Pathways addresses several aspects of this challenge directly through the academic support provided, of which tutoring is the major, but not the only, component. However, the need for such support must be understood as having several elements.

First, through the many focus groups (particularly those with parents in their first languages); it was clear that the limited English language skills of many parents precluded their direct support of their individual children's academic endeavours. Second, even where language skills were not a barrier, there are many parents whose own education was not at a level where they could support high school subject knowledge.

Third, even where a parent's background might include subject knowledge, a very clear difference was identified between the methods of instruction and expectations of the high schools (and teachers) attended by Pathways youth and the experiences of their parents. This is also a challenge for many tutors who "learned it differently" than what students are experiencing; and today's high school students are expected to demonstrate concretely these different understandings of many subjects (including math, but also science, history, geography and others). These direct needs for subject support are met largely through Pathways tutoring five evenings each week in the community.

Fourth, the structure and organization of the secondary school curriculum is extremely challenging even for parents well educated in Ontario. Courses, with vastly different destinations (not to be called "streams" any longer), are often not well understood by students or their parents. The result of this appeared to be inappropriate placements; most notably, students in courses at the wrong level of instruction or with a destination which did not correspond to their aspirations and/or abilities.[6] Assessment for special needs is both difficult to access, particularly for second language learners, and frequently supports which are mandated through the assessment process are not well understood, even if they are available. Support to understand choices and to advocate for appropriate placements was, therefore, a clear need. Pathways directly addressed this need through the staff position of Student Parent Support Worker (SPSW), as well as the unique "program facilitator" position. Created in the Program's third year, the facilitator position provided more specialized support to parents and staff needing to focus on particular students with special needs. This expertise is crucial to incorporate into the Program if the numbers of such youth are to be able to access the support the schools are mandated to provide for such learners.[7]

Finally, with respect to academic support, young people at this stage of adolescent development typically have challenges in organization, study skills, etc. exhibiting instead traits of procrastination, and disorganization, all of which

suggests that on these dimensions as well, Regent Park youth are more "normal" than they are different. What is quite different, however, was the lack of organized support to help these many young people through this phase in their development. Therefore, Pathways staff and volunteers work directly with young people to help develop these skills beginning with recognition of the need for such competencies if they are to succeed academically. For some students, one-to-one support is needed from time to time, and at key junctures ("teachable moments"), while for others, they are able to develop more successful work habits through positive identification in group environments (e.g. tutoring or mentoring). Pathways offers both individual and group support for these young people to see themselves as able to succeed in academic terms; and such support must not be isolated from their emerging self-images and images of their community – a community which, following the initial years of Pathways, has begun to develop a strong ethic of success for all youth.

Self-image and community image. A third set of barriers was also identified in the action research/community engagement work leading to the development of the Program. Somewhat more difficult to define, there appeared to be deeply felt obstacles related to the stigma of the community which had been, unfortunately, internalized by most young people in the community. Related to what Sennett and Cobb (1972) termed "the hidden injuries of class", in the absence of a vision of themselves as "successful", many young people in the community had turned to alternative venues for "inclusion"; some to gangs as a focal point for acceptance and support. Yet others, perhaps the majority from our initial work, learned the "skill" of becoming "invisible"; that is, of neither drawing attention to themselves or their challenges, nor making demands of the adults in their lives who were unable (often for basic material reasons) of providing support.[8]

These internalized self-images are, of course, intimately woven within the fabric of the community and the educational system as typified, for example, by the response of a vice-principal to

the initial description of the goals of the Pathways to Education Program prior to its inception who unashamedly responded with the question "why bother?"(see sidebar). While her particular expression was not typical, the unspoken message communicated consistently to Regent Park youth was felt nearly universally by those dozens of young people we listened to in designing the Program; and this view has been echoed in other communities in their own community engagement work prior to their implementation of Pathways. Most important, this attitude only served to further strengthen our resolve; it could not go unchallenged. The best refutation would be our students' success.

The depth of feeling of individual doubt was complemented by a further obstacle, that of the community's despair which reached its zenith in the year we developed the Program. Having endured the murder of nine young men, many felt their vision of a future shift from one of struggle, perhaps to be overcome, to one of fatalism for themselves and their children.

Additional challenges related to self-image are more specifically related to the transition from elementary to secondary school – a focal point of Pathways efforts – and include students' own concerns with the "loss of status" and anxiety about their academic abilities and performance. In recounting these and related concerns, Tilleczek (2007) notes that they are normal adolescent experiences, though we would note that their effects are exacerbated by the social context of "risk" that exists for those young people from disadvantaged communities such as Regent Park.

Pathways was deliberately designed to address these internalized images in several ways. First, the design of the group mentoring program specifically tries to address the need for young people through a group, rather than as individuals, to experience pro-social and positive activities where they can further develop age appropriate social skills (including problem-solving, team building, communication, negotiation, etc.). As the literature on mentoring indicates, the content of such relationships is far less important than the relation-

ships themselves. In the case of Pathways, we deliberately structured this aspect of the Program to encourage the development of relationships not only with adults, but among the youth themselves.[9]

The second major focus for addressing these needs is in the development of the specialty and career mentoring elements of Pathways. Specifically, as the young people moved from grade 10 to grade 11, it was clear that an alternative approach would be needed for them to view themselves as more successful, as capable – with support – of developing their talents and interests. Our understanding of the practical obstacles they faced included a lack of role models in the community representing the range of possible occupations, the lack of parental networks to access professionals or skilled workers in a variety of organizations, etc.; in short, the absence of the social capital required to imagine and experience possible futures which had heretofore been closed to them. Pathways response – the specialty and career mentoring elements – has evolved to include a variety of group and individual experiences which would otherwise not be available to youth in the community. These include, for example, a Steps to University course (Sociology 101) offered by UofT in the community, a post-secondary credit course in business by Ryerson, and a college general education credit course by George Brown; a mentoring opportunity (for Pathways youth to mentor younger children from similar communities) through the Youth Technology Mentoring Program, group projects with Soulpepper, CanStage, and others, one-to-one mentors from Junior League of Toronto for young women interested in business and professions; development of internships with law firms, unions, and other employers which would be otherwise unavailable to our youth, career nights involving professionals from a variety of occupations drawn from similar backgrounds to Pathways' youth (e.g. Black Lawyers Association, or teacher candidates in York's "urban diversity" focus), to name a just a few. Each of the Pathways programs in other communities have developed their own menus of opportunities

for specialty and career mentoring through the development of local relationships with a range of individuals and organizations.

Each and every one of these opportunities is broadening and allows each young person to develop a practical and concrete understanding of a field of study or work. And each requires, as part of specialty mentoring requirements, "reflection" which enables the young person to consider their experience and how it has helped them clarify next steps, even if those include a decision to pursue a different path.

Third, the obstacles of negative self-image are also directly addressed through several staff roles, most importantly, the SPSWs. The development of this support arose directly from two sources: the experiences of the youth recounted by groups and individuals in designing the Program, and the literature on best practices in youth development programs. Specifically, there is the need to demonstrate to each and every young person that they are indeed capable of achievement beyond that which would be "pre-determined" by their circumstance. Hence, the focus on ensuring that each young person feels they are capable of higher achievement by providing the supports necessary to see them actually meet higher expectations. This process – the everyday relationships of both expectations and support – begins with their initial registration in the Program and continues through the support provided for their post-secondary transitions.

Fourth, the community image challenge has also been addressed through the basic design of the Program. Throughout the research leading to the design of the program, many individuals and groups in the community spoke poignantly of what needed to be done and presented two conclusions. First, to have the positive impact on the community which everyone wanted it was incumbent on us to include all youth – neither targeting nor creaming, as is done in virtually every other similar intervention.[10] Second, that to be successful we needed to provide the supports for the full duration of their high school careers; i.e. not merely in grade 9 or 9 and 10, but throughout their time in high school.

Fifth, unspoken, but of great consequence, were the significant barriers which existed in the transition from high school to post-secondary activities. These barriers include financial challenges (the application fees and the need for a credit card to complete on-line applications for both universities and colleges), and academic counselling sufficient and appropriate to support the student to apply and be accepted by the institution and program most able to meet their needs, and the need for post-secondary institutions to provide support required (in some cases) for Pathways graduates to succeed. These barriers have been addressed by Pathways in very specific ways.[11]

The financial support provided through Pathways scholarship has been used for application fees and deposits. Pathways has facilitated the post-secondary on-line application process through use of credit card and, eventually, arrangements with the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) and the Ontario Colleges Application Service (OCAS) for direct payment of application fees for Pathways students.[12]

More important, the support required for students to envisage themselves in different programs and institutions has been provided through Pathways career mentoring. While public policy (to be discussed further below) has traditionally viewed funding and academic preparation as the principal obstacles to high post-secondary participation for low-income students, our experience suggests that two other factors play more prominent – and related – roles. In particular, while Pathways supports both their academic and financial preparedness, there is an element of "psychological" preparedness that is evident from the Program and is, of course, related to self-image. The success of students in high school has, hopefully, been internalized and gone some distance in demonstrating to students their worthiness to pursue post-secondary education. However, the steps beyond high school are similarly anxiety producing and many young people from the community are still extremely hesitant to accept their abilities at face value. Working with staff, the selection of programs and institutions to apply to provides the space to voice such anxieties and for staff to situate these in the context of the youth's trajectory; that is, the sum total of their experiences over the previous several years which have brought him/her to this juncture. The success of students in their transitions to post-secondary programs is a testament to the centrality of the relationships built throughout the young person's years in the Program. That they are psychologically prepared – as well as academically and financially prepared – to attend college or university and that they have the disposition to do so is a function of these relationships with Pathways staff.

In addition, Pathways staff in Regent Park worked with staff at several post-secondary institutions to develop college and university supports for "first generation" students which built on the supports provided through Pathways.

There is no substitute for students having supportive relationships with SPSWs, with mentoring staff, with volunteer tutors and mentors over their years in the Program. The ability to provide these relationships and to provide for the availability of a variety of adults was deliberately designed into the Program and follows from lessons learned over many years by youth development programs in a variety of jurisdictions. For example, the need for a "sustained adult contact" (what we have termed a "constant adult presence") is a characteristic of successful initiatives which features prominently in the evaluation of programs for youth from disadvantaged communities (see, for example, Long 1996 for HRDC), and is embodied in the SPSW role. Other commentators on youth development programs have noted the related need for "multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers" (Connell, Gambone and Smith; 2001).

Continuing to learn for program improvement. Finally, with respect to barriers, the research component of Pathways has played, and continues to play, an important role. Specifically, it is crucial that there be on-going monitoring of results and an ongoing commitment to research necessary for program improvement. These are serious commitments which have enabled the Program to ensure that the young people,

their parents, the volunteers and staff are all able to provide the feedback about whether or not the obstacles are, in fact, being addressed by the Program. Procedurally, annual surveys of students, focus groups with students, parents, tutors and mentors, as well as annual program planning with staff, all inform the Program as to whether the young people are benefiting from the supports provided and whether they are able (and willing) to take advantage of these supports. In addition to these formal vehicles, staff are responsible for (informally) monitoring participation in school and the Program, with a view to identifying challenges that students face to increased participation. These data are crucial to ensuring that the Program continues to evolve to respond to the needs identified through the actual experience of our young people.

The principal feature of the "action research" approach out of which Pathways grew is its ability – and the practical necessity – of engaging in ongoing program improvement based upon actual data including outcomes and perceptions of participants. Kemmis and McTaggert (1990) have noted that "Linking the terms action and research highlights the essential feature of this approach which involves the testing out of ideas in practice as a means of improvement in social conditions and increasing knowledge."

Obviously, the social conditions needing to be improved included the unconscionably high dropout rate in Regent Park and, by extension, in other similar communities. As well, however, are the conditions of intergenerational poverty which is both a major factor in and the result of the historical and persistent poor educational outcomes for large numbers of inner-city youth. The practices and factors which produced such a situation were expressly to be addressed through the Program; as Grundy and Kemmis (1981) noted, the features of action research include that:

> the project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a strategic action susceptible to improvement;(and the) project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activi-

ties being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated.

This approach to program development and improvement, consciously oriented to change in social conditions, but also to improvement in and development of the Program itself, is congruent with several other approaches to program development more recently described including "community action research" (Senge and Scharmer, 2006), "developmental evaluation" (Gamble 2006; Patton 2002), and "applied dissemination" (Pearson 2006); and "emergent learning" (Darling and Perry 2007). That Pathways' approach to program improvement and ongoing program development has been consistent with these frameworks is not coincident. Rather, the Program has developed from an understanding of the need to respond to the "ground" while also considering the systemic nature of the challenges being addressed.

Program Elements

If the extensive community consultations outlined earlier were the catalyst for understanding the types of support which would be required, it was a practical challenge to determine the specific supports and how they might best be delivered. Two key processes were used to address these questions.

First, a series of focus groups were held with a variety of stakeholders perhaps most importantly, with young people and parents from a variety of cultural groups, as well as with key informants from a range of institutions including the Health Centre, the local elementary schools, and several community agencies. Second, it was crucial to determine the experience of other programs which had, to that time, tried to address similar challenges among similar populations.

A third and key element in the background work was facilitated through the Toronto District School Board; namely, to determine the actual graduation/dropout rate for young people from the community. While this ability to generate data by neighbourhood may be taken for granted today, more than a decade ago, this was not

part of the repertoire of school board research departments. Therefore, while residents, both young people and their parents, had a clear sense that the young people in the community were not being successful, there was a profound lack of data from which to determine both the extent of the challenge and possible factors which led to the poor outcomes. At the time Pathways was being developed, no such data by community was available. While it might be assumed that we can now take for granted that local school authorities can – and will – provide data on the outcomes of students by community, this has proven to be a significant challenge in many prospective Pathways communities.[13]

Based on this further research, several conclusions became clear:

> Pathways started to take shape as a program that would support young people to complete high school, addressing the high dropout rate of Regent Park youth. It was made clear that the negative image of the community, the fear (and in many cases hopelessness) experienced by many parents, and the despair identified by youth themselves, was rooted in the challenges of the transition to high school and lack of success of young people from the community. (Bales 2004:31)

It cannot be stated too strongly that the components of Pathways were designed to specifically address some of these important challenges. In particular, in addition to the challenge of direct academic and financial support, the mentoring and Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSW)/advocacy components were specifically designed to address the internalized hopelessness and despair that had come to dominate the emotional landscape of the community among both parents and young people.

The program is voluntary and open to all students within the defined geographic community, and since inception in 2001, over 90% of Grade 9 Regent Park youth have registered. Of the many things we learned from the community in the development of the Program, two in particular stand out: first, that to effect major changes we needed to include all the young people, neither targeting or creaming; and, second, that

to have the impact we sought, we needed to support the young people for all their years in high school, rather than for just one or two years as many other programs had done. Pathways focuses on school attendance and grades to ensure students accumulate the credits needed in each year of secondary school, in combination with social supports such as advocacy and mentoring. Students and their parents' sign a contract in which they agree to comply with the program requirements related to school attendance and program participation in exchange for Pathway's support for the duration of secondary school enrolment. In partnership with parents, community agencies, volunteers, local school boards and secondary schools, Pathways provides four types of support.

Initially, program staff contacted students and parents through their grade eight classrooms where teachers and school administrators cooperated to help contact prospective students and parents by hosting information sessions. Over the years, the Program's reputation and the community's support have meant that grade eight students gravitate to the Program and registration of each successive cohort became more routine, with students and their parents contacting Pathways to ensure their registration.

The Four Supports[14]

"It is the scope of the program, its embrace of the whole child and child's family, school and social environment that is its genius." (Michael Valpy, Educating Adna, The Globe and Mail, Jan. 24, 2004)

This section describes the four supports provided by the Pathways to Education Program: academic, social, financial and advocacy supports. The innovative blend of supports provided by Pathways helps to redress the effects of living in a disadvantaged community where expectations of success in school have traditionally been low. Pathways raises the expectations of success among students, their families, their schools and their community, and provides the supports young people need to meet those expectations.

The four supports make up an integrated package that addresses a variety of barriers that youth from disadvantaged communities face. The experience of Pathways in Regent Park, as well as research from other programs (e.g. Jerald 2007), suggests strongly that offering two or even three of the supports will not create a strong enough program to change the expectations and achievements of a community of youth. Pathways' success demonstrates that low income youth, particularly those who may be struggling with educational, family, peer or personal issues, benefit from a critical mass of supports that provide sustained adult contact, monitoring, encouragement and incentives to succeed.

The following description of the four supports provides an introduction to what Pathways does. These supports will not necessarily look exactly the same in other communities as they do in Regent Park. But the core of what is provided will be the same – tutoring, mentoring, financial support and advocacy.

Academic Support

Students receive tutoring in nearly all academic subjects and guidance to navigate through the complex high school curriculum at all levels and for all grades. They learn study skills and gain general knowledge. There is tutoring available in language and literacy skills for those who need it. There is also a computer lab developed in partnership with another local agency. This setting provides an opportunity to receive tutoring in computer literacy, support to work on computer-based research and projects, and an opportunity to explore technology-related careers. The goal is to provide quality academic tutoring to all students on a regular basis within the community, addressing different learning styles and meeting a variety of course expectations.

Volunteer tutors are matched with students who can benefit from their knowledge and who can relate easily to them in terms of learning style, background or interests. The tutors are a diverse group including university students, professionals and community members. Tutoring is provided four evenings a week in safe community settings, supervised by staff. There are two main tutoring sites in the community in spaces provided for a nominal rent (largely to cover the cost of utilities).

Tutors work one-on-one or with small groups of (up to four) students. Textbooks and other resources are provided for use during tutoring. Following feedback in the Program's first year, the initial "optional" tutoring was – at the students' request – revised to include specific expectations. All students are required to attend tutoring when they enter Grade 9, and all are encouraged to continue. Students whose marks are below the Pathways standards (60% in Grade 9, 65% in Grade 10 and 70% in Grades 11 and 12) are required to attend twice a week. Students in special education programs or taking English as a Second Language (ESL) are advised to attend tutoring regardless of their marks.

Attendance is monitored. Tutors and students fill out log sheets after every session documenting what was covered and how well the student is doing. Program Facilitators for Tutoring, who are part of the Pathways staff team, are responsible for ensuring a safe environment and effective tutoring. They help the volunteers develop their skills in engaging students and identifying special needs and learning styles, and matching suitable tutoring techniques to each student. Pathways also found that many students who are doing well in school appreciate having a place to study that offers a safe and positive learning environment. High-performing students also choose to attend tutoring because they have developed a mentoring relationship with a volunteer tutor or staff person and want to maintain that contact and support.

One of the important lessons over the years has been that it is important for the tutoring space to include both high achieving and struggling students. While some might think there might be embarrassment for some of these young people, experience has shown that, while they know that they are receiving different kinds of specific academic support, it is a central tenet of the Program that all youth are receiving the support; that whether you are working on calculus or struggling with fractions, whether you are critiquing Shakespeare or struggling with literacy, Pathways will support every young person. As well, all students can benefit from study and organizational skills during these high school years.

Teachers from the high schools attended by Pathways youth are encouraged to provide advice on the study areas where tutoring could help their students the most. They provide feedback to the staff Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) who spend time in the schools; and who ensure that information from teachers is passed along through comments to the Program Facilitators at tutoring. This communication can take a variety of forms but is fundamental to the ability of the Program to help students focus on their specific academic challenges and make the best use of the tutoring support.

Social Support

Mentoring is about relationships that affirm who the young person is and help promote positive choices about who they can become. The goal is to have all students engaged in mentoring relationships and programs suitable to their age, interests and abilities during each of their years in Pathways.

Group mentoring.

Young people are connected with adult mentors who develop supportive relationships with them through group mentoring activities for the younger teens (Grades 9 and 10). The mentoring groups, which meet every two weeks, help to reduce isolation, promote development of group and personal identity, provide adult role models and encourage both learning and fun.

There are 12 to 15 in a group, with two or three mentors. The mentors are volunteers who, like the tutors, come from different walks of life and backgrounds. The focus and intent of mentoring in Pathways differ from many other mentoring programs, which are directed at youth engaged in specific high-risk or anti-social behaviours and which try to change those behaviours. Pathways group mentoring is intended to create a positive sense of belonging to a peer group and to a caring commu-

nity, to break down isolation, and to contribute to the development of a range of social and communication skills including problem solving, team building, and leadership development.

The groups meet in safe settings, supervised by staff. In Pathways' first year, the groups initially met once a month, but both students and volunteers provided feedback that they wanted to meet more often. The groups subsequently met every other week as of the Program's second year. (Many Pathways participants have said they would like to meet weekly, but there was simply not the space available in the community or the program capacity to handle weekly group meetings.) Approximately half the sessions are from a menu of Pathways-generated activities; the other half determined by the group itself.

A Program Facilitator (Pathways staff) is responsible for ensuring that the group mentoring experience is safe and effective. The Facilitator develops volunteer mentors' skills in engaging students using a variety of techniques and activities that are age-appropriate and suitable for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, the staff facilitates a regular "debriefing" discussion following each session to elicit feedback from volunteers and to provide volunteer mentors with the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Specialty and career mentoring.

Specialty and career mentoring activities are developed for the older students, based on their interests and aspirations. All Grade 11s and 12 are expected to participate in specialty or career mentoring. By Grade 12, the emphasis is on planning for life after high school, whether that is post-secondary education oremployment.

Specialty mentoring opportunities help youth explore their educational and career interests and make progress towards their goals. The experiences are matched to the talents, interests and strengths of individuals or small groups. The experience must involve relationship-building and some skill development or personal growth. The specialty mentoring experience may involve a

specific learning opportunity, volunteer or work experience. Mentoring may be arranged by Pathways or by the student. A number of students are involved in activities at their high school. Participation is monitored by their SPSW. The emphasis is on the quality of the experience because the opportunities are all so different.

Students have regular contact with their SPSW, who keeps track of what students are doing for specialty or career mentoring. Students and their SPSWs are expected to discuss planning for the student's educational and career choices on a monthly basis. Students are encouraged to document and reflect on their skills in preparation for post-secondary education and employment and be able to discuss what they are getting out of the mentoring experience and how it supports their personal and career goals. A form for recording students' and SPSWs' reflections on their learning and progress has been developed.

A Program Facilitator organizes activities and helps students crystallize their plans. The Facilitator also conducts career interviews and provides counselling on course selections and post-secondary and employment options and issues. S/he helps students make applications for mentoring experiences and for post-secondary education programs.

The impetus for the career mentoring element of the Program was the specific feedback from several grade 12 students in the first Regent Park cohort who requested support when they were applying for post-secondary programs. A quick informal survey of that first cohort showed that only two of 87 students had received such help from school guidance staff. As with other Pathways supports, the career mentoring element was developed directly in response to the experience of the young people themselves.

In addition to visiting university and college campuses to see what they look like and feel like, and to meet representatives who talk about post-secondary education, the career mentoring staff also facilitate student visits to workplaces to provide that direct experience, as well as information on different occupations through "Career Mondays" which began as informal meetings of

adults with groups of students potentially interested in different fields. Networks of staff and supporters of Pathways are used to identify people who are willing to come and talk about what they do and how they got there.

Pathways students are involved in a range of different specialty mentoring experiences. Some examples include students taking a university or college credit course, participating in a community-based media arts program, drama and music programs, etc. organized by Pathways but provided by a range of community partners. And, as noted above, Pathways students have increasingly been involved in specialty mentoring through their participation in extra curricular activities at their secondary schools, something very few young people from Regent Park did prior to Pathways given that many felt stigmatized and "uninvited" by those schools. Clearly, this increased level of participation is an important positive impact of Pathways (and a variety of other factors); that is, the culture of many secondary schools has become more inviting to young people from disadvantaged communities.

Financial Support

Pathway provides both immediate, practical financial assistance to high school students and their families, and a longer-term financial incentive to encourage students to stay in the Program, graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary studies. In Regent Park, students receive transit tickets to get to and from school because there is no local secondary school in the community. (Pathways programs in other communities use a combination of transportation and lunch vouchers where transportation is provided.) They are also given some school supplies at the beginning of each school year.

The practical impact – and benefit – of the immediate financial help is important. Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) fares are not cheap. Even with a student discount, a Metropass costs over $100 a month (up from $80 at the beginning of the Program). At $5 per day, lunch vouchers in other Pathways communities are an equivalent benefit. The financial support provides an incentive

for students to stay in the Program and stay at school. It eliminates some of the financial stress experienced by families – the cost of transit fare to get their children to and from school – and it gives the students confidence that they won't be denied the opportunity for post-secondary education because the family lives on a low income.[15]

The transit tickets (or lunch vouchers) also provide a degree of leverage for the Program. They are only to be used for school, and usage is closely monitored. Tickets are reduced for every day a student does not go to school. If a student starts skipping school altogether or does not attend Pathways program activities (tutoring and mentoring), staff will make every effort to find out why and to encourage participation. But if the student does not show any interest or improvement, the transit tickets may be withdrawn or suspended until attendance improves. And the withholding of the immediate financial support provides an important moment of accountability for students and occasion for connection with Pathways staff, as well as an important opportunity for parents to connect with their children and their challenges in meeting program requirements.

The scholarship provides a longer-term incentive. Upon graduation, students can receive up to $4,000 ($1,000 for every year they are in the Program), to be paid to a publicly supported post-secondary institution on their behalf. The assistance is held in trust and is contingent on the ability of Pathways to raise the necessary funding. This support also serves as an opportunity for Pathways to provide important information to both students and their parents with respect to financing post-secondary education, serving as a moment for discussion of "financial literacy" and the details of provincial financial support schemes. Pathways' role in this area became quite practical; for example, since few parents in Regent Park have credit cards, on-line applications for post-secondary programs were facilitated through the use, in the initial round of applications, of the Program Director's credit card. This immediate challenge led to the Program developing a relationship with both the college and university application services which

enabled Pathways students to apply with fees billed directly to Pathways. The Program, in turn, paid such fees from the scholarship funds set aside for this purpose. Similar arrangements were made with several colleges and universities for direct payment of scholarship funds upon enrolment of Pathways students. Such processes developed as a direct result of the Program's commitment to provide the practical support that students from low income communities require to avail themselves of the opportunities more privileged families take for granted.[16]

Advocacy Support

Student/Parent Support Workers (SPSWs) provide a human and personal link between the student, the school, the family and the Program. This is a staff role. They monitor the young person's progress and intervene to remove barriers, where possible. They track student attendance at school and at tutoring and mentoring. They help the student deal with problems at school, and liaise with teachers and other school staff. They provide a channel for information-sharing within the Program.

The SPSWs meet at least every two weeks with their students when the youth collect their immediate financial support. This is an opportunity to talk directly to students. The SPSWs provide informal counselling, and refer students who need additional services to other programs or agencies. They keep in regular contact with parents, encourage them to be involved in their child's education, and keep them informed about the program. The role may be seen as a form of active case management (with the emphasis on "active" when needed). Pathways research shows that approximately half the young people connect with their SPSWs at least once a week and more frequently when necessary to address an immediate challenge.

The average ratio of students to SPSWs is 50 to one. The pressure on SPSWs depends on how the students on their roster are doing at school and in the Program, and how many schools the SPSW works in. Some have suggested that this ratio is too high to be effective. However, unlike many other social services, Pathways is predicated on the as-

sumption – clearly validated by the Program's results – that the young people who participate are not, by definition, "ill" nor in need of intensive interventions (though a few may have such needs at a particular time). Rather than pathologizing the young people of low income communities, it is fundamental that Pathways views these youth as "normal". While some may have more serious challenges, the vast majority share the need for support to address the challenges of poverty, rather than immediate physical or mental illness. The evidence clearly suggests that most young people in the most impoverished communities can succeed with the appropriate supports.

In schools where there is a large cluster of Pathways students, the Program negotiates space on certain days and times for the SPSWs to be on site (usually in an office which is used at other times by the school social worker or nurse). Even in the schools where Pathways has a number of students, the young people from the Program are just a fraction of the total student population at the school. That means the SPSWs have to work to make their presence felt and their concerns heard to advocate for their students.

The SPSWs go to school staff meetings to introduce themselves and talk to teachers about what their role is. In addition to meeting the principal and vice-principals, they get to know attendance secretaries and other office staff, guidance counsellors and social workers, and other staff in the schools. There are a variety of ways in which SPSWs and teachers develop relationships including a letter which they distribute to introduce themselves and the Program, and offers to meet teachers and discuss how the particular teacher prefers to communicate about the progress of students (e.g. feedback form, e-mail, phone or personal conversations). This is important information that SPSWs need for the Program to work more effectively with students, including information on students' subject challenges or specific assignments, behaviour, communication challenges with parents, etc. This feedback from teachers goes into the communications loop at Pathways. SPSWs also are the conduit for feedback, in turn, from tutors or mentors to

the schools and/or to individual teachers.

SPSWs usually meet first-time Pathways parents in person at an Open House for Grade 9 parents. They also meet parents at registrations and re-registrations for returning students. In October, the SPSWs contact parents to make sure they have received the information they need about where and when their child is supposed to be at tutoring and mentoring. The SPSWs keep in contact with parents generally once a month, although this is often difficult due to parents' work schedules and other responsibilities. If there are issues to be resolved involving their child, the contact with parents can be more frequent.

Over the years, several specific questions have been asked about the SPSW role. First, some have wondered if it is a role that could be effectively provided by school staff. A longer discussion of the respective roles of schools and communities is necessary to answer this question, and is found in our discussion in the third part of this article. However, a short answer is that, while there are some school staff who have played such roles for some students, there is considerable evidence that a school-based approach to the role is neither more efficient nor more effective than having the role vested in a community-based agency. Secondary schools lack the resources to ensure this support. More important, many in the schools feel this is not a priority since it can be provided by other agencies whereas school staff must focus on their principal instructional mandate. This is coupled with an understanding that the advocacy function would suffer if attempted by school staff and that school staff would be in a difficult position if their advocacy put them in conflict with other staff members or school board employees (including school principals or superintendents) as has sometimes been the case.

In addition, the reality of school transfers strongly suggests that, for the many students who change schools for a variety of reasons, such support organized through a particular school would lack the continuity the SPSW provides through Pathways.

Perhaps most important, was the judgment that the "distance", both lit-

eral and figurative, between the school and the community, coupled with the need to address community-based risk factors, works against the likelihood of success were this function vested in a particular school-based role. That judgment was based on the long experience of the young people, their parents, older youth and adults, and a range of practitioners; it was not simply a reaction the then current government[17]

This is not to suggest that the relationships between Pathways and local schools (and school districts) are not important; quite the contrary. Pathways success is predicated on having solid and respectful relationships between the Program and the schools. Such relationships are, in fact, a function of the clarity of roles which Pathways has helped to bring to the support of at-risk students.

Second, some have wondered about the backgrounds of SPSWs. One of the initial decisions was to have a diverse group of staff. Diversity is sometimes understood to mean cultural diversity; and Pathways has always strived to ensure that the major cultural groups are represented among staff; that the young people of the community see themselves and their cultures represented in those who are often role models. The diversity of staff, however, also includes a diversity of education and employment backgrounds. Some SPSWs have been certified teachers whose knowledge of the educational system is crucial to support our young people. Others have training as professional social workers, and child and youth workers, where their background and experience approaches the challenges of adolescent development with a repertoire of its own. Still other staff have little professional training, but a wealth of practical employment experience in youth serving programs or in community development, bringing yet other experience and knowledge to the challenges at hand. While such diversity of professional background has made the development of a common Pathways culture somewhat difficult, it is also crucial for the Program's ability to meet the diverse needs of our young people.

Third, some have wondered whether, in a world of social media and technology, the role might be possible to

provided through a technologically-mediated relationship, and whether this might allow for higher ratios and, therefore, at a lower cost. There is much evidence on the importance of establishing meaningful relationships as part of an array of otherwise comprehensive supports to at-risk youth. There is little evidence, however, that such relationships can be effective in the absence of face-to-face interaction. The trust needed is unlikely to develop in the absence of such face-to-face relationships. Proof of this proposition may be the fact that many (if not most) Pathways young people are themselves using a variety of social media and its place in their lives is likely little different from their more economically privileged peers. However, despite this fact, their preferences are clearly and overwhelmingly to meet with their SPSWs, for support, for problem-solving, for encouragement, for the relationships they require to thrive. While technologically-mediated relationships may be effective for some young people, there is good reason to believe that the necessary relationships for Pathways youth are those which have a personal character and are face-to-face.

Finally, and as noted above, with respect to the SPSW role, perhaps the most consequential decision in the development of Pathways was that of having the "advocacy" and informal mentoring support provided through paid staff, rather through volunteers. This decision was coupled with a purposive decision to have the mentoring program focus on group, rather than individual, activities through the development of a range of social, communication, and problem-solving skills aimed at breaking down isolation, as much as more traditional "skills building". The result was that the role of the SPSW became a crucial link to each of the other Pathways supports while, at the same time, meeting the need for a "constant adult presence" to support the individual needs of Pathways young people. This decision was consistent with both the available best practices in youth development programs and the informal, but clearly consequential experiences – the lived experiences – of many successful young people in the community. Unfortunately, there were few ex-

amples of how to "institutionalize" such relationships.

A Brief Note on Research

While a longer discussion of the role of research in Pathways and its relationship to both accountability and program improvement appears in Part III, a number of points may be useful at this juncture. Specifically, the program was consciously designed to include a research function from the outset that could provide simple and clear measures of success; in particular, two interim measures (or "leading indicators" well documented in the literature: 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, including so many long-term private individuals, foundations and corporations, and continuing to include both provincial and now Federal governments, have often noted the importance of strong and consistent results on these metrics as a factor in their decisions to grant multi-year funding.[18]

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 longstanding 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.

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.

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. 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.

Several lessons from the research approach adopted by Pathways are discussed in Part III, following the more detailed presentation of some of the Program achievements in Part II.

Funding the Program

When Pathways launched in September 2001, aside from the two grants we received from the Counselling Foundation of Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we had only raised $2,000 and two weeks' worth of transit tickets. Funding the Program meant adding additional funders. Because RPCHC had no prior history of long term fundraising, the Counselling Foundation of Canada supported the work of two consultants to assist with fundraising and building the fundraising capacity of the Health Centre. They facilitated links between the Health Centre, the business world, and other institutions, and helped create new funding opportunities. In the fall of 2001, we hired a Manager of Development. A project structure was agreed to and two board committees were created. The new structure would provide the board with clear oversight of Pathways and the potential to sustain the Program, or at least get it going. The responsibilities of the two board committees were: (1) the Pathways Committee of the RPCHC Board, consisting of board members and community representatives, was responsible for effective trusteeship of the Pathways to Education Program, ensuring clear lines of accountability, as well as setting policy and processes to ensure systems for monitoring and evaluating the project; and (2) the Development Committee, consisting largely of people from outside the community, especially business leaders who could support fundraising efforts. This latter committee was responsible for overall development functions, fundraising, project-related marketing, and public relations. Existing board committees simply did not fit the needs of Pathways. Its scale was too great and its demands unique. Getting the reporting relationships worked out took time, and this was another major milestone in the life of Pathways. The reporting relationships meant that the RPCHC Board was clearly in an oversight role. Hiring a Manager of Development was also a major step. This resulted in a greater ability to focus fundraising efforts and link with potential and existing funders.

Fundraising for Pathways was very difficult. In particular, during the first

year we hadn't as yet produced any results; however, we managed to make our annual goals by the "skin of our teeth". The fundraising was very time-consuming for us as Executive Director and Director of Pathways and it wasn't until we produced hard data on the first student outcomes that we had a real value proposition to offer. Our strategies included (a) targeting corporations, foundations, high net worth individuals, and the provincial government, and (b) always asking for multi-year commitments. We developed a five year business plan and made some initial overtures to the Ontario Government. Our first major grants came from the banks. Then another major milestone was reached when we received a multi-year grant from the Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund. The volunteer members of the Development Committee became more committed to fundraising for Pathways as they began to see the results which showed the huge differences in attendance and achievement between students in Regent Park before the Program and students in Pathways. This allowed people to see we were on the right track and multi-year commitments became more frequent. They knew no similar program had tried to include all young people in the community, to attempt so quickly to improve the achievement of so many. The fact that more than 90% of the eligible parents and young people had voluntarily joined Pathways was but one of the many achievements that helped sustain Pathways.

Gala events and golf tournaments were organized annually; we created a newsletter and started getting recognition, but it was never easy. Each year we made our budget thanks to some very special "angel donors" who intuitively understood we were "on to something" which could potentially impact thousands of low income youth in Canada and beyond. In 2004, we finally received an initial, one time grant from the Ontario Government. In 2004/05, after four years of work, Pathways funding was composed of 17% from government, 37% from individuals, 30% from foundations and 15% from corporations. Each year as a new cohort of youth joined Pathways increased funding was required and it was consistently rein-

forced to us, by each kind of donor (governments, individuals, corporations, and foundations), that the tracking of results and the results themselves were what mattered to them. The reason Pathways was having this significant impact was because of two primary commitments underpinning the design of the Program: (a) a shift in the "lens", from a singular focus on the school environment to a broader focus on the community as a whole and (b) ensuring a comprehensive community-based approach to the provision of the necessary supports.

Our marketing efforts were finally paying off and the Program and its results were beginning to be recognized and disseminated, primarily through newspaper articles. By 2005, interest in replicating Pathways to Education was coming from other communities and donors. Other communities were coming to visit Pathways more frequently and expressing interest in the Program for their community. Interest in seeing the Program in other communities was also being increasingly expressed by donors. RPCHC wanted to share its learnings with other communities in order that other low income youth would have a fair chance at achieving their potential. We also determined that to sustain Pathways in Regent Park we had to replicate the Program. These expressions of interest led to the creation of a public foundation called Pathways to Education Canada in 2005, another major milestone in the life of Pathways.

Pathways Canada's primary purposes would be transferring knowledge, ensuring program quality and outcomes, supporting the community agencies and their staff who would deliver the Program locally, and raising the considerable funds needed for replication. The Chairman of the Pathways Canada Board was an exceptional fundraiser and he was committed to replicating Pathways as far and wide as possible. By 2005, Pathways to Education had reduced the dropout rate from 56% to 11% and increased post-secondary participation for the first cohort from 20% to 80%.[19] Because of the large impact Pathways was having, a major Canadian corporation decided to invest in replicating Pathways to Education and provided a start-up grant in 2006. After successful

start-up, along with the development and design of a process for replication, a generous two year grant followed along with multi-year grants from other donors including the Counselling Foundation of Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Government and several individual donors. The replication process proved successful in five additional low income communities in Ontario and Quebec.

Another milestone was reached in 2007 when the Boston Consulting Group did a *pro bono* economic analysis of Pathways. BCG undertook a detailed study of the Program to determine the social return on investment (SROI). The final analysis showed the Program's SROI is high and positive. The specific calculations include that every dollar invested in Program generates a $25 return to society in terms of decreased social costs and an increased tax base, $400,000 is the cumulative life-time value for each graduate, $50,000 is the positive net present value for each student, and there is an internal rate of return of 9.4%. The SROI includes more easily identifiable "hard" benefits such as incremental tax receipts and lower transfer payments, and it includes a very conservative estimate of savings from other key benefits such as a lower crime rate, lower teenage pregnancy, healthier youth, etc., as well as "second generation" effects. The BCG study leveraged our fundraising ability immensely as we now had hard data proving Pathways was an incredibly cost effective program. Questions such as "can society afford Pathways?" changed to "we can't afford not to replicate Pathways".[20] The Development Committee and staff worked hard at meeting our annual fundraising goals which we never failed to do. The beginning of Pathways Canada and the development of a process for replication opened up new funding opportunities and we received multi-year funding from the Ontario Government, the Manitoba Government and, most recently, the Federal Government.

The replication of Pathways in the five second generation communities is a story that goes beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say there are now eleven Pathways programs from Halifax to Winnipeg with students getting re-

sults that mirror those reported in Part II of this paper for Regent Park. In addition, Part III will discuss some of the principal learnings from the development of the Program.

In Part II, we present a detailed look at Pathways results, what Pathways has achieved, both in Regent Park over the past decade, and in the second generation communities.

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[1] "First generation" refers to those young people who are the first generation of their family to attend a post-secondary program.

[2] The 1996 census data available at the time included that the Regent Park/Moss Park communities had over 40% single parent families, fully twice the City average, more than half the residents were immigrants, and nearly 80% visible minorities.

[3] The roots of Jack Geiger's initiative drew on his own studies of health centres in South Africa. Geiger first proposed a medical school-sponsored community health centre in 1958 as part of his senior thesis as a medical student. "Along with the residents … Dr. Geiger worked to establish a center that would combine local resources with federal funds to empower this economically devastated community of the Mississippi Delta. By establishing a network of aggressive outreach and education efforts, and developing multiple health employment opportunities, the Delta Health Center and its participants became an engine for social reform." (Chu 2006: 139).

[4] The original data referenced here was produced by Dr. Robert Brown of the Toronto District School Board as a special tabulation in the Fall of 2000. We are indebted to him for his continued support of Pathways and, more important, for his longstanding commitment to the issues of student success.

[5] Fergusson et al 2005 offered a more complete overview of factors, both school-based and non-school based, in work for the Ontario Ministry of Education five years after we designed the Pathways program

[6] This is not a recent phenomenon as evidenced by the consistent results of the Every Student Survey conducted by the former Board of Education for the City of Toronto, which showed that young people from poor and immigrant communities were often "streamed" into vocational, rather than academic, programs. As Pathways results strongly demonstrate, this need not have been the case since the distribution of ability is clearly "normal" in a community the size and diversity of Regent Park.

[7] It should be noted that, over the first several years of Pathways in Regent Park the actual proportion of designated special needs learners (i.e. those formally assessed) is no greater in Regent Park than in the province as a whole (approximately 12.5% of secondary students). While there are undoubtedly others requiring focused supports but not yet assessed, this is a challenge across the city and province. However, there is some suggestion that students from low income areas are more likely to have difficulty accessing such services and assessments. Even if this is the case, it is still doubtful that the result would change the basic finding: that Regent Park youth as a whole are more similar to learners across the province than had been assumed based on their past performance; which suggests that their challenges were not primarily cognitive. Through the data collected over a longer time period, and which now includes Pathways students in other communities, it seems clear that there is a great variation in the proportions of students with identified special needs; variations both within and across the initial five Ontario Pathways communities, ranging from just 2% (RP Cohort 4) to fully 30% (Rexdale Cohort 1). This variance itself is cause for concern.

[8] Jonathan Kozol, the well-respected chronicler of inner-city education in the U.S., has written extensively about the phenomenon of "invisibility" in, for example, his book *Ordinary Resurrections* (Vintage, 2000).

[9] It should be noted that "group mentoring" was called "one of four models for the 21st century" by a leading expert on mentoring (Jaffe in Grossman 1999; Herrera et al 2002) in reviewing promising practices in the U.S. However, at the time there were no empirical studies of group mentoring with high school students. Indeed, Pathways can reasonably be understood as a pioneer in this area, as well as several others.

[10] The programs identified as most similar to Pathways by Boston Consulting Group (2007) include, for example, I Have A Dream, Sponsor a Scholar, Quantum Opportunities Project, to name a few, some of which have been demonstrably effective, but none of which has had as broad a reach as Pathways; and each includes both a smaller number and a more select (even if self-selected) groups of students. See also the evaluations of these initiatives in Kahne and Bailey (1999) for I Have a Dream, Johnson (1998) for Sponsor-A-Scholar, and Hahn et al (1994) and Maxfield et al (2003) for Quantum Opportunities Program. The findings, while positive, suggest that Pathways' results have sur-

passed those of each of these programs, and has done so for more students, a more heterogeneous group of students, and at lower overall cost per student. See Boston Consulting Group (2007). For example, Johnson notes that Sponsor-A-Scholar, the program BCG suggested is closest to Pathways in scope, served a total of 180 students in four years, which is a similar number for each Regent Park cohort, and Pathways serves four to five cohorts at any given time. The Sponsor-A-Scholar number of students compares to nearly four times that number involved in Pathways in its first four years.

[11] The involvement of Pathways in supporting post-secondary applications arose from direct feedback from students in the first cohort who, in the Fall of their fourth year, asked for such support. It evolved as a response to an informal poll which showed that only two of 87 students said they had received any such help from their school guidance counsellors. This support eventually developed into the "career mentoring" component of Pathways.

[12] Supplemental fees for particular programs at particular institutions still must be paid directly via credit card to the specific institutions, and Pathways has developed procedures for this, as well. These agreements were developed during the initial years and for the Program in Regent Park and mechanism for doing this in other Pathways communities are still being worked out.

[13] The challenge of providing such data today is not a function of the technology which it was, to some extent, a decade or more ago. Rather, the immediate and ongoing challenge for some school boards has become the lack of research staff with the ability and interest to pursue such questions.

[14] Much of these descriptions are based on a *Guidebook* prepared in 2006 for internal Pathways use with prospective communities. The authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of Cheryl Hamilton to the preparation of the initial *Guidebook*.

[15] It should be noted that, since the Program's inception, the subsequent Government in Ontario re-instated a program of tuition grants, rather than solely loans, to post-secondary students from the lowest income families. The

future of such grants is unknown, given the current fiscal challenges facing the Province.

[16] A story often told, and confirmed several times, recalled the loss of a post-secondary space by a Regent Park student who simply lacked the funds for a "deposit" following their acceptance to the university. Unable to "hold" the space, the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education was effectively lost for that young person. This was a common occurrence in the community.

[17] A part-time staff member, a former long-time teacher in the community, suggested in the second year of the Program that all had been fine (or at least better) for these young people before the school board amalgamation when the former Toronto Board of Education funded projects and special school designations which yielded additional staffing in the schools; and which, coupled with a political commitment, had offered a modicum of hope for success to both parents and youth. Rowen's response was that "the 'good times' were not very good to the young people of Regent Park." This exchange offers both a view of the good intentions of many educators and a reminder of the unspoken distance between the perceptions of some professionals and those they were genuinely working to serve. Pathways development was purposefully designed to bridge that distance.

[18] 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. 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).

[19] More detailed and extensive results are the subject of Part II of this article which includes nine Regent Park cohorts and four cohorts from four Pathways "second generation" communities. However, at this juncture it should be mentioned that the dropout rate for the initial Regent Park cohorts have increased as a result of students who remained in secondary school longer than they might have without Pathways, but still did not graduate (to 14% to 19% for the first three cohorts). We did not know that this would be the case in 2005, assuming that the "holding" of students in secondary school would ultimately lead to their graduation. That said, the reduction in dropouts remains quite impressive compared to the 56% prior to the Program.

[20] In 2010, with more students and sites to study, BCG undertook another round of analysis to refresh the three-year-old study. These most recent results, once again, confirm the enormous social return that is generated from an investment in education: $24 is the social return for a $1 investment in Pathways to Education, $600,000 is the lifetime cumulative benefit to society for each graduate.

"WHY BOTHER?"

"Why bother?" has become a shorthand expression based on a true story told by Program Director Norman Rowen at the first Pathways graduation (June 2005) in Regent Park as follows:

"On a grey Thursday afternoon at the end of April of 2001, I was in the office of the vice-principal of one of the high schools that Regent Park young people had historically attended. While there was encouragement from the school board when we first talked about the idea of Pathways, I was told we had to get the cooperation of individual schools if we wanted to be there. I described to the vice-principal how the idea came about, what we were thinking about doing, and the relationship we hoped to have with her school among others. But I was there to convince her to cooperate with a program which was unknown; we had neither students nor staff yet. And while we had heard skepticism from some people we spoke with, I wasn't prepared for her directness and honesty when she asked "why bother?"

You can understand that four and a half years ago we couldn't answer her question with results about reduced absenteeism or increased credits. We didn't yet know that more than 95% of high school youth in the community would participate, or that, four years later, over 90% would still be in school.

But what she was telling us in her question was serious. And it's not only about one person. It was – and perhaps still is – about many people who believe that the stereotypes of this and other similar communities are the only reality, and who let those stereotypes deny opportunity; that not so subtle disrespect that so many young people experience every day".

Following the graduation ceremony, the then TDSB Director of Education asked about the particular administrator, stating in no uncertain terms that "we don't want that kind of person leading our schools". Rowen's reply to her at the time still holds true: "The problem isn't the ones who say it, it's the ones who don't". While this attitude is likely held by far fewer school staff, the lived experience of many Pathways young people and others in similar communities is that such "why bother" sentiments continue to present challenges to them.

Replication Principles
1. Engage the community in a process which expresses aspirations, identifies barriers and solutions, and creates ownership of the program.
2. Start with a credible community-based organization and build an accountable governance structure.
3. Include all the community's children in the program and support participation proactively.
4. Set program standards to ensure program integrity and encourage youth responsibility.
5. Develop a staff team to manage, fund, coordinate and deliver a high quality, cost-effective program, with volunteer tutors and mentors who meet diverse needs.
6. Take an integrated and holistic approach to enabling students to achieve their educational and career goals.
7. Build and maintain quality relationships with partners, supporters and donors/funders.
8. Measure and report outcomes.
9. Learn from best practices, experience and feedback. Keep improving program implementation.
10. Sustain a long-term commitment to Pathways and its values.

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING
*   Boston Consulting Group reports that $1 invested in Pathways generates a $25 return to society in terms of decreased social costs and an increased tax base.
*   McKinsey Company report on student retention and success in Quebec identifies Pathways as one of four programs most likely to reduce poverty and dropout rates in the Province of Quebec.
*   Monitor Group partner and author of the book *"Forces for Good",* Heather McLeod Grant, says "never before have we seen such impressive results".
*   United Nations independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, highlights Pathways as one of the most outstanding educational models seen during her 2009 visit to Canada.

The Regent Park Community

Regent Park is a community not far – yet a world away – from the glass and steel towers of the downtown condos and business district of Toronto, Ontario. Regent Park is among Toronto's poorest communities, economically. The picture most outsiders have traditionally had of the place is unremittingly negative. But for those who know it better – and there are more of them since Pathways has raised the community's profile in a positive way – Regent Park is a community with a great spirit and a determination to help itself. The Regent Park Community Health Centre estimates that there are approximately 26,000 residents in its catchment area.

In 2004, *Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty 1981-2001,* reported on trends in poverty in Toronto from 1981 to 2001 and highlighted just how economically disadvantaged Regent Park is and how entrenched its poverty is (United Way of Greater Toronto 2004). The Report mapped the highest poverty neighbourhoods in the city by economic family* and by Census tracts. Of the 428 Census tracts in 1981, there were just four neighbourhoods with very high family poverty rates, and they included Regent Park. Very high poverty means a rate of at least 40%, which is more than three times the national poverty rate (13%) in 1981. (ibid: 10)A brief history of the community sheds some light on its challenges. As the oldest and largest public housing development in Canada, the housing project was built in two phases, between 1948 and 1959, as a place for the city's underprivileged to live. It covers 69 acres. While it was considered a fine project in its day, with its emphasis on green space instead of vehicle traffic, the design – without streets running through it and virtually no storefronts – created an isolated island of poverty disconnected from the surrounding neighbourhood. The layout has been blamed for creating an area that attracts criminal activity because it is cut off from the normal ebb and flow of city life. Because the site is considered private property, even though it is comprised almost exclusively of publicly-owned housing, it does not have regular municipal services going through it, like police patrols and garbage pickup. The housing has also deteriorated over the past half-century, adding to the impression of urban decay.

The catchment area of the Regent Park Community Health Centre takes in Regent Park and an adjacent section of Moss Park. The Moss Park community as a whole includes an old industrial area, gentrified housing, redeveloped heritage buildings and expensive retail services. The poorer side of Moss Park, which is in the catchment area, is known for the number of homeless people who roam its streets. A number of emergency shelters and other services that seek to help the homeless in downtown Toronto are located in Moss Park.

There is no denying that Regent Park is a community whose residents suffer many hardships. But this community also has important strengths and assets. Over the years, the residents of Regent Park have demonstrated their resilience, and their love of their children.

Regent Park has a history of community organizing and standing up for its own interests. Community activism emerged strongly in the 1960s. For example, tenants formed the Regent Park Community Improvement Association to represent residents in the housing project, and spearheaded development in 1969 of an integrated social service delivery unit on site in the community. A review of the experiment published in 1979 concluded that the project was a success largely because of the determination of the local residents, who persisted in spite of the obstacles. (Barr 1979)

Around the same time, a group known as the Trefann Court Mothers advocated on behalf of their school children. They felt the education system had given up on their kids before they got started in school. In particular, they objected to the streaming of low-income and racial minority children into vocational and other non-academic high school programs. The school board implemented new policies to try to redress the situation and provide more support to children in inner city schools.

It took nearly five years of local organizing before the Regent Park Community Health Centre opened its doors in a storefront location in 1973. The President of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association, Neil Tanner, spoke at the opening ceremony of how hard a group of tenants worked to turn the dreams of the community into a reality. (RPCHC 2003: 2) The population has changed over the years. Today, Regent Park reflects the diversity of one of the most international cities in the world. Some 80 languages are spoken. Nearly 60% of residents are immigrants. Almost two-thirds of those immigrants came to Canada since 1996. Almost 80% of residents are visible minorities.

The diversity of its people is a real source of strength. Many immigrants are living in Regent Park on low-paying jobs because their education credentials and work experience in other countries are not recognized in Canada. The community has had more than its share of struggle, mixed with remarkable community resilience.

*The "economic family" is defined by Statistics Canada as a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.