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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Editor Dr. Robert Shea

ARTICLES

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Volume 17, Number 2 2018

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dr. Robert Shea, Founding Editor

I am pleased to bring you Volume 17, Issue 2 of the *Canadian Journal of Career Development*. This issue features six articles focusing on mentoring, interventions, skills, evaluation, and best practices. It closes off with three graduate student research briefs which address information and communication technologies, career identity development, and international student workforce integration practices at universities. I strongly recommend readers take a look at the research that our graduate students are undertaking.

As we close out 2018, the Journal has a lot to reflect upon. Our mandate is to present articles in areas of career research and practices that are of interest to career development practitioners. In 2019, the Journal will increase its effort to promote research and research briefs submissions by graduate students and new authors.

There are many changes coming in 2019 for the Journal. Our social media accounts will start accepting 'Ask the Editors' questions. These questions can be specifically about the Journal or about publishing in general. If we can answer it, we will! In addition to this, our Associate Editor will be writing short 'How to' instructional documents. We have heard from you that publishing is not something taught at many universities and that many find it a challenging process. We hope to help demystify this process for graduate students and new authors, as well as make it less intimidating. These 'How to' documents will be published to our website and social media accounts.

In the years to come, we look forward to providing you with high quality and a large selection of research. Keep an eye out for all the new projects starting in 2019. If you have any feedback or opinions you would like to provide the Journal, please send them to Associate Editor Diana Boyd.

Thank you to our readers, authors, reviewers, and supporters for another great year.

Doing research in career development?
Here are two great resources to help!

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This award is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who have devoted their lives to enhancing the field of career development. It honours Etta St John Wileman, a champion and crusader of career, work and workplace development in Canada in the early 20th century.

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Ce prix vise à souligner et à célébrer l'apport des personnes qui ont consacré toute leur vie à améliorer le domaine du développement de carrière. Ce prix honore la mémoire d'Etta St. John Wileman, pionnière et fervente militante du développement de carrière et de l'amélioration des conditions de travail au Canada au début du XXe siècle.

Pour plus d'information sur les nominations et la sélection, ainsi qu'une liste des récipiendaires du prix, visitez **ceric.ca/prix_wileman**.

DATE LIMITE : 30 JUIN 2019

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Mentorship as A Career Intervention: An Evaluation of a Peer-Mentoring Program with Canadian University Psychology Students

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Student Mentorship Program, a formal peer-mentoring program for undergraduate students (mentees) and graduate students (mentors) studying psychology in Canada. Previous researchers have not sufficiently examined the effectiveness of formal peer-mentoring programs, particularly within the psychology discipline in higher education settings. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the program's effectiveness as a career intervention, including its acceptability, feasibility, outcomes, strengths, and limitations. One hundred and seventy-eight students participated in the program and data was collected at three time points (at baseline, three and six months). Descriptive and inferential statistics were obtained, in addition to minimally inductive content analyses for open-ended items. Results indicated that most mentors (63%) and mentees (58%) experienced the program as effective to highly effective, with 100% of participants supporting of the continuation of the program. Overall, 86% of mentors and 63% of mentees reported that participation in the program was moderately to strongly related to the achievement of their career goals. Program strengths and limitations were identified which reinforce aspects of the program that have served participants well, in addition to areas which should be improved for future iterations of the peer-mentoring program.

Keywords: mentoring; peer-mentorship; career intervention; higher education; psychology

Many people attribute their success or accomplishments to the individuals who helped them achieve their goals (Foster & MacLeod, 2015). These individuals are typically referred to as mentors. Mentoring is an intense caring relationship in which two or more individuals come together to promote both professional and personal development. While there are various models of mentoring, the primary objective for many mentoring relationships is to help the mentee develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform at their highest potential, leading to enhanced career development. Engaging in a mentoring relationship can serve as a valuable career intervention which elicits benefits for both mentors and mentees. In higher education settings, the guidance and support afforded to students can greatly impact their decision-making processes and self-awareness, advancing personal and vocational growth. This paper offers a brief overview of the mentoring literature, with a specific focus on peer-mentoring, and its utility in the higher education context. Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) is used to conceptualize the application of a peer-mentoring program, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Student Mentorship Program, in the post-secondary domain. The central aim of this investigation was to explore the Program's effectiveness as a career intervention, including its acceptability, feasibility, outcomes, strengths, and areas for improvement. Study limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

Peer Mentorship

Mentorship has been consistently demonstrated through research to have substantial benefits for mentees (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Leidenfrost, Strassnig, Schabmann, & Speil, 2011) within groups (Milner & Bosser, 2005), organizations (Alan, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003) and educational programs (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Although the mentoring literature has grown steadily over the past twenty years, researchers have made

little progress in terms of implementing a consistent definition of peer-mentoring. Crisp and Cruz (2009) identified over 50 definitions which varied in breadth and scope (for more information, see Crisp & Cruz's comprehensive systematic review). For the purposes of this evaluation, we aimed to utilize a definition that accurately captured the nuances of formal peer-mentorship in a higher-education setting. Kram (1983)'s definition of peer mentoring was used which described peer-mentoring as a helping relationship in which two individuals come together, through formal mentoring schemes, in the pursuit of fulfilling some combination of functions that are career-related (e.g., information sharing, career strategizing) and psychosocial (e.g., confirmation, personal feedback). Kram's definition coincides with other seminal theorists' definitions including Levinson and colleagues' (1978) comprehensive emotional investment and Kanter's (1977) instrumental praxis. Later factor analytic studies of mentorship functions articulated two clusters of mentorship behaviour congruent with Kram's "psychosocial" and "career" functions, pointing to their relevancy in today's post-secondary context. Kram's dual-function model maps on well to higher-education domains as students' prescriptive and instructional needs parallel Kram's career function and students' facilitative needs which transcend educational variables to encounter students in all their psychosocial dimensions parallels Kram's psychosocial function (Carden, 1990). As such, this definition was selected due to its previous applications in higher education contexts and its focus on formal peer-mentoring schemes.

Peer mentoring is a valuable alternative to the traditional concept of mentorship. Traditional forms of mentoring consist of a hierarchical relationship in which the mentor is considerably older and more experienced than the mentee (e.g., faculty-student mentorship, employer-employee mentorship). Unlike traditional mentoring, peer-mentoring pairs mentors and mentees who are generally equal in age and power to provide career-related and psychosocial support and guidance (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Mentorship between peers is thought to eliminate potential power dynamics which may exist in traditional forms of mentorship. An egalitarian stance is assumed which allows peer-mentors and mentees to utilize their shared experiences as students, freeing them to be more candid and transparent, while fostering an atmosphere conducive to collaboration. Other mentorship modalities have emerged over the years including group mentoring which involves a mentor establishing mentoring relationships with multiple protégés. When considering the desired outcomes and objectives of the current mentorship program, didactic peer-mentoring was deemed most appropriate due to its emphasis on the development of an individualized experience.

Functions and Formats of Peer Mentorship

Consistent with Kram's (1983) definition, peer-mentorship typically involves a dual function of providing psychosocial support and career-related or vocational support. Recent definitions have included a third function known as role modeling. Role modeling refers to the processes whereby the mentor leads by example and the mentee respects and emulates the mentor (Pelligrini & Scandura, 2005). Role modeling was previously subsumed within the psychosocial function; however, it is now considered a distinct function according to some scholars (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001). The degree to which the mentor actualizes the various mentoring functions is thought to influence the mentee's satisfaction with the mentoring relationship.

Important distinctions have also been made between informal and formal mentoring schemes. For example, informal mentoring relationships typically develop organically, on the basis of mutual identification, and involve a mentee actively seeking out a mentor with the aim of achieving long-term goals (Milner & Bosser, 2005). In comparison, formal mentoring relationships typically have a third-party stakeholder who matches a mentor with a mentee (e.g., organizations, educational institutions) based on some predetermined criteria or desired outcome (Crisp & Cruz, 2008). Various institutions and organizations assume that

formal mentoring relationships are as effective as informal mentoring relationships; however, there is little research evidence which supports this claim (Milner & Bosser, 2005).

Peer Mentoring Programs in the Higher-Education Context

Some post-secondary institutions establish formal mentoring programs (e.g., traditional and/or peer formats) to assist students with their professional and career development (Milner & Bosser, 2005). Peer-mentoring in higher education is widely considered to be an effective intervention to ensure the academic success and retention of students (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2005). Mentees in university settings have indicated increased academic performance and social integration (Leidenfrost et. al., 2011), among other positive outcomes contributing to the improvement of students' educational experiences. However, many peer-mentoring programs are offered through general student services at post-secondary institutions, often lacking the specificity needed to enhance one's experience in their area of academic major or in the domain in which they are interested in pursuing a career. The vast majority of investigations focusing on mentoring outcomes and processes have been conducted with undergraduate student populations as recipients of mentorship across a variety of higher education domains (Crip & Cruz, 2008).

Unfortunately, existing research in the higher education context has a number of limitations. Firstly, mentorship programs in university settings frequently encompass traditional (i.e., hierarchical) mentoring formats, which rely on informal mentoring schemes (e.g., they occur spontaneously), requiring prospective mentees to actively seek out a mentor who is typically older and more established in terms of their career development (e.g., a professor; a field placement supervisor), underscoring the gap in power and status. Secondly, considerably less research has centered on mentor outcomes. Over the past two decades, efforts have been made to narrow this gap in the literature (Allen, 2007; Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Terrion & Leonard, 2007), although it remains that research from the mentor's perspective is fragmented and still emerging (Allen et al., 2008). Finally, while an assortment of mentoring programs have been implemented in various contexts in Canada, few have systematically investigated their effectiveness.

Likewise, the mentoring intervention literature within psychology is limited. The current evaluation aimed to address the above limitations, while focusing on mentorship in higher education settings. We implemented a formal, peer-mentoring program which pairs students at different stages in their training in psychology, namely, undergraduate and graduate students. The evaluation examined outcomes for both mentees and mentors in an effort to contribute a more coherent understanding of the benefits of mentoring on mentors.

The CPA Student Mentorship Program

The CPA Student Mentorship Program was developed as a student engagement and support initiative afforded by the CPA Section for Students in Psychology, an organized group of psychology students lead by an executive committee which offers opportunities for student engagement, professional development, and learning. The purpose of the program was to afford undergraduate psychology students (i.e., mentees) from various academic institutions in Canada the opportunity to gain career support and guidance from graduate students (i.e., mentors; also from various academic institutions in Canada) in navigating their educational training, professional development, and career decision-making. Students pursuing bachelor degrees often experience distress and uncertainty about their future careers and formal mentorship has been identified as a possible solution to reduce such concerns (Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Leidenfrost et al., 2011). While anxiety about future careers is not unique to psychology students, the field of psychology is exceptionally diverse in that there is a wide range of academic and clinical specializations that become significant considerations for students pursuing careers and/or higher education in these

areas. For example, the CPA, a national association which works to advance the science, practice, and education of psychology in Canada, supports 33 independent sections which encompass unique specializations of study and professional practice within the broad field of psychology (e.g., quantitative electrophysiology, clinical psychology; CPA, 2016). Thus, peer-mentorship can function as a much-needed career support guiding important decision-making and exploration processes for undergraduate students in psychology.

A substantive area of concern within the mentoring literature regards its constricted theoretical basis (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The theoretical foundation which shaped the current pedagogical approach to peer-mentoring utilized principles of student-centered learning (Rogers, 1961). According to Rogers (1961), "the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning" (p. 276). Student-centered learning is a theoretical perspective which captures how students engage in their mentoring relationships. Within the extant literature, peer-learning is thought to have greater impact on students than traditional teaching in the classroom (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Instead of providing a highly-structured program with regimented mentee-mentor activities, the CPA Student Mentorship Program encouraged self-directed learning through its open and flexible, semi-structured format. In this context, student-centered learning represented a de-emphasis of traditional formats of teaching and mentorship (e.g., teacher-centered learning) which typically requires mentors to serve as teachers or as the primary source of knowledge. In contrast, the CPA Student Mentorship Program placed mentees in the center of the learning process as active (versus passive) participants, while encouraging self-determined action, responsibility, and autonomy, over one's education and career development. The mentor's role in the program was conceptualized as a facilitator, rather than a teacher, with the primary goal of guiding, supporting, and providing the conditions and information necessary to initiate the mentee's self-directed learning. It was expected that, through peer-mentorship, collaborative action would lead to novel self-discoveries and an abundance of knowledge. Consistent with the peer-mentoring model as described by Kram (1983), placing a mentor closer to the level of a mentee enhances learning, benefiting both individuals in the mentoring relationship.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Alternatively, SCCT is a theoretical perspective that captures what students do in relation to their peer-mentoring relationships. SCCT seeks to explain three interrelated aspects of career development: (a) how basic academic and career interests develop, (b) how educational and career choices are made, and (c) how academic and career success is achieved (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). An extension of Albert Bandura's general social cognitive theory, this career development theory incorporates a variety of intricately linked variables including self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals which play a key role in SCCT's model of educational and vocational interests development, choice-making, and performance attainment (Lent et al., 2002). Of central importance is continued activity exposure or engagement in learning activities which enable individuals to receive feedback, set goals, and refine their skills. Peer-mentorship is thought to be one method that can facilitate the development of interests, leading to increased self-efficacy and positive expectations for desired outcomes. SCCT identifies several targets at which educational and career programs can be directed, including peer-mentorship programming. These targets include efforts to expand interests and nurture career aspirations, while facilitating career goal setting and implementation. As such, the CPA Student Mentorship Program was developed to afford experiences that promoted exposure to personal mastery experiences and support, as well as access to the information needed to enhance one's career decision-making processes.

The CPA Student Mentorship Program is unique in that it is designed to target students in

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT | REVUE CANADIENNE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE CARRIÈRE

higher education settings, yet it is distinct from other peer-mentoring programs in university settings as it is housed within a large professional organization (i.e., the CPA), enabling students to connect with their peers who are enrolled in various institutions and programs located across Canada. As there is a lack of evidence investigating the utility of formal peer-mentoring programs, particularly in psychology, the purpose of this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the described program, exploring its outcomes, feasibility and acceptability, strengths and areas for improvement, as well as the evidence supporting the program's continuation.

The Current Study

Three broad research goals guided this investigation. The first research goal was to evaluate the interest in and feasibility of the CPA Student Mentorship Program. This goal was evaluated through three exploratory, open-ended research questions: (1) to what degree did graduate and undergraduate student trainees in psychology express interest in a formal peer mentorship program? (2) to what extent did mentors and mentees express equal interest to create peer dyads (3) to what degree were participants retained throughout the duration of the mentorship program?

The second research goal was to assess participants' views of the program as a measure of program acceptability. In particular, we were interested in examining participants' perceptions of the program through two exploratory questions: (1) to what extent did participants perceive the effectiveness of the program? (2) to what degree are participants interested in the continuation of the program? To evaluate the acceptability of the program, participants were asked to list up to three strengths and three weaknesses of the program.

The third research goal was to evaluate whether involvement in the mentorship program influenced mentors' and mentees' personal and career growth, and to examine what mentorship function was most evident among mentees as a result of their participation in the program. This was examined through four, open-ended research questions: (1) To what extent do mentees and mentors experience changes in their level of self-efficacy throughout the course of the program? (2) To what degree does the peer mentorship program facilitate mentors' and mentees' personal growth? (3) To what extent does the peer mentorship program facilitate mentors' and mentees' career growth? (4) What mentorship function was most frequently elicited to support mentees' development in the program (i.e., vocational support, psychosocial support, or role modeling)?

Method

Participants

One hundred and seventy-eight students from various Canadian post-secondary institutions consented to participate in the peer mentorship program. To be eligible as a mentee, participants were required to be: (1) a student member of the CPA; (2) currently enrolled at the undergraduate level at a Canadian post-secondary institution; (3) interested in pursuing graduate studies or a career in an area of psychology. Eligible mentors were required to meet the following criteria: (1) a student member of the CPA; (2) currently enrolled at the graduate level at a Canadian post-secondary institution or a post-doctoral fellow at a post-secondary institution or a related setting (e.g., research centre, hospital); and (3) pursuing training in an area of psychology.

Measures

The program was evaluated through the use of a number measures. Standardized measures and instruments developed for the purposes of this investigation were incorporated. Moreover, we relied on narrative responses, close-ended questions, and questions requiring Likert-style responses. The variety of question formats allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.

Demographic Information Questionnaire. A demographic information questionnaire was developed to evaluate participant characteristics. The questionnaire was administered to mentees and mentors prior to beginning the program and queried participants' age, gender, university level, program of study, ethnic origin, and marital status.

Career Goals Questionnaire. The career goals questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this investigation. A version of this questionnaire, with slight modifications, was administered to mentees and mentors at each time point. The purpose of the career goals questionnaire was to assess confidence in obtaining career goals and to track whether confidence, among other variables, increased as a result of being a mentor/mentee in the peer mentorship program.

Mentor version. Using a 4-point Likert-style scale, mentors were asked to rate: their confidence in their mentoring abilities (0 = "extremely unconfident"; 4 = "extremely confident"), the effect that serving as a mentor would have/was having on their career development (0 = "no effect; 4 = "substantial effect"), the effect that serving as a mentor would have/was having on their personal growth (0 = "no effect" to 4 = "substantial effect"), and the degree to which serving as a mentor was important to achieving career and education goals (0 = "extremely unimportant" to 4= "extremely important"). Higher scores on this measure suggest greater mentor self-reported confidence.

Mentee version. The mentee version of the Career Goals Questionnaire was similar to the mentor version, with minor adaptations to address the mentee status. Using a Likert-style scale, mentees were asked to rate: their confidence that they would achieve their current career goals (0 = "extremely unconfident"; 4 = "extremely confident"), the degree to which they were sure of the steps to take to be successful in achieving career goals (0 = "extremely unsure"; 4 = "extremely sure"), and the degree to which having a mentor was important to achieving career and education goals (0 = "extremely unimportant"; 4 = "extremely important"). Higher scores on this measure are indicative of greater mentee self-reported confidence.

New General Self-Efficacy Scale. The New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE; Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) assesses self-efficacy to mobilize oneself to meet career/education demands. It consists of 8-items to which respondents answered using a 5-point Likert-style scale (0= "strongly disagree"; 5= "strongly agree"). Higher scores are indicated of greater perceived self-efficacy. The NGSE has been demonstrated to have strong internal consistency among undergraduate students (α = .86) and among students completing professional degrees (α = .85).

Mentoring Functions Questionnaire-9. The Mentoring Functions Questionnaire-9 (MFQ-9; Castro & Scandura, 2004) is a questionnaire that assesses mentees' perception of benefits from mentorship and is one of the most reliable measures assessing mentoring functions (Wanberg et al., 2003). The MFQ-9 is a shortened version of the 20-item MFQ (Scandura, 1992) and is comprised of 9 items which respondents answered using a 5-point Likert-style scale (0 = "strongly disagree"; 4 = "strongly agree"). Higher scores on this measure suggest greater perceived benefit. The measure consists of three subscales (three items per subscale), assessing psychosocial support, vocational support, and role modeling achieved during the mentoring relationship. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the whole scale, vocational support, psychosocial support, and role modeling were .86, .84, .77, and .80, respectively, for male mentees and .93, .88, .90, and .89, respectively, for female mentees (Hu, 2008).

Program Strengths and Weaknesses Questionnaire. The Program Strengths and Weaknesses Questionnaire was administered at the 3-month and 6-month follow-ups. Using two open-ended questions, mentees and mentors were asked to list up to three program strengths and up to three program weaknesses at each time-point.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT | REVUE CANADIENNE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE CARRIÈRE

Procedure

Recruitment. Prospective participants completed an online application form which included items soliciting demographic information, areas of interest in psychology, previous mentorship experiences, and goals for the mentoring relationship. Prospective participants then submitted their completed applications to the program coordinators who engaged in a predetermined matching procedure to pair undergraduate students (n = 97) with graduate students (n = 81) in a peer mentoring dyad. The matching procedure aimed for three primary criteria to be met across participants to be paired in a dyad: (a) area of interest in psychology, (b) goals for the program, and (c) gender (Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, Lin, & Lin, 2014; Mitchell, Eby, & Ragins, 2015). To meet demand, several mentors (n = 16) were engaged in more than one peer-mentoring relationship. Upon agreeing to the program's Terms and Conditions, participants provided consent for participation in the program evaluation and completed a baseline measure. Subsequently, participants were sent a program manual which was customized to educate them on their specific role (i.e., mentor or mentee).

Peer matching. Mentor/mentee dyads were matched primarily on shared areas of interest in psychology, rather than geographical location. Once participants expressed interest in the program and a sufficient match was identified by the program coordinators, prospective mentors and mentees were connected by e-mail. Within a dyad, participants identified modes of communication which were best suited to their unique relationship (e.g., telephone, e-mail, video conferencing). Dyads were encouraged to "meet" bi-weekly and, although content was limited to professional subject matter as per the Program's Terms and Conditions, the topics of discussion were determined by the two individuals in the relationship so as to individualize the experience.

Program evaluation. The 2015-2016 peer-mentoring program lasted six months (October, 2015-March, 2016), paralleling the academic school year. Upon being matched in a peer-mentoring dyad, participants completed the baseline questionnaires (T1), which included the demographics information questionnaire, the Career Goals Questionnaire, and the NGSE. Three months (T2) and six months (T3) into the peer-mentoring relationship, dyads were contacted and asked to complete follow-up questionnaires. At T2 and T3, all participants completed the Career Goals Questionnaire, the NGSE, and the Program Strengths and Weaknesses Questionnaire. Additionally, mentees completed the MFQ-9.

Data analyses. Program interest, feasibility, and acceptability were examined using descriptive statistics. Strengths and weaknesses of the program identified through open-ended questions at T2 were examined through a simple, minimally inductive content analysis which generated response frequency (Mandich, Miller, & Law, 2002). The second author examined participant responses and developed thematic categories based on the responses. Next, the first author reviewed the proposed themes and made recommendations. The thematic categories were finalized once a consensus was reached between the first and second author. Each response was subsequently classified into one of the thematic categories. To establish reliability of thematic coding, the third author independently coded a random 25% of the data. A final consensus regarding the classification of responses was achieved among all authors.

Examination of changes in mentee and mentor self-efficacy as a result of participation in the program was conducted using repeated-measures analyses. Initially, we intended to conduct an analysis comparing outcomes across T1, T2, and T3. However, due to a decrease in responsiveness between T2 and T3, we chose to focus on changes occurring in the three-month period between T1 and T2, using a paired-samples t-tests. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate participants' ratings of personal growth and career growth, and mentorship functioning.

Results

Program Interest and Participant Demographic Characteristics

Following three months of advertising the program (July to September, 2015), 117 prospective mentees and 93 prospective mentors expressed interest in participating in the peer mentorship program. Of these, 97 mentees and 81 mentors chose to participate. A total of 97 dyads were formed, with 16 mentors matched to more than one mentee.

Mentee and mentor demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1. Both mentees and mentors were more likely to be female, which is consistent with the current composition of psychology students at the undergraduate and graduate level in Canada (American Psychological Association, 2014). Participating mentees varied in year and discipline of study, while mentors were more likely to be Master's-level students and nearly 50% were in a clinical psychology program.

Program Retention

Over the course of the six months during which participants worked together in peer-mentoring dyads, a decrease in completion of measures was observed (i.e., from T1to T3). All participating mentees and mentors completed measures at T1. At T2, only 27 mentees (28%) and 43 mentors (52%) completed measures, whiles at T3 these rates dropped to 14 (14%) and 36 (44%) for mentees and mentors, respectively. It is difficult to determine whether these individuals were no longer engaged in their peer-mentoring relationships, or whether they were participating in the program, but were choosing not to complete the measures.

Participants' Evaluation of the Program

Ratings of program acceptability. Program acceptability was evaluated through participants' rating of program effectiveness and whether the program should continue. Among both mentors and mentees, the program was generally rated as effective at T2, although just over a third of mentees and mentors rated the program as neutral. Effectiveness ratings are summarized in Table 2. All mentees and mentors indicated that the peer mentorship program should continue.

Program strengths. Across the responses provided by mentors and mentees at T2, eight themes emerged that summarized the participants' perceived program strengths. Identified strengths are summarized in Table 3.

Among mentees, the most commonly noted strength was having the opportunity to learn from someone more senior than them or from someone who had experience pursing advanced education and training in psychology. Similarly, as described by one mentee, the "ability to discuss matters specific to psychology with someone who completely understands what you're talking about" was beneficial to participants. Paralleling this strength which was identified by mentees, many mentors noted that having the opportunity to pass on their knowledge or contribute to the discipline was a strength of the program. For instance, one participant described that she "[felt] like [she] was contributing to someone's life goals," while other mentors described "knowledge sharing," "supporting the psychology community," and "allow[ing] mentees to access knowledge from mentors already enrolled in programs of interest" as positive aspects of the program.

Mentors and mentees highlighted a number of similar strengths. In particular, the opportunities provided by the program for networking or creating connections nationwide with individuals in the discipline was noted by just under half of participants. Many participants identified the administrative aspects of the program, such as the peer matching, the manual and documents provided, and the general organization, as a strong aspect of the program. Mentors and mentees also reported that the personal growth or skills that they developed as a result of their participation was a positive aspect of the program. For instance, one mentee indicated that the program "promote[ed] self-discovery and personal development," while a mentor

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT | REVUE CANADIENNE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE CARRIÈRE

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Mentors and Mentees

Characteristic	Mentees (n = 97)	Mentors (n = 81)
Age, X (SD)	22.15(5.16)	26.20 (3.03)
Sex, n (%)		
Female	87 (90%)	61 (24.7)
Male	10 (10%)	20 (75.3)
Ethnic Background, n (%)		
African Canadian/Black	9 (9.3%)	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	16 (16.5%)	6 (7.5%)
Caucasian/White	48 (49.5%)	64 (80.0%)
Latino	2 (2.1%)	1 (1.3%)
Middle Eastern	12 (12.4%)	6 (7.5%)
Other	10 (10.2%)	3 (3.8%)
Marital Status, n (%)		
Single, Never Married	89 (91.8%)	53 (67.9%)
Married or Common Law	6 (6.2%)	25 (32.1%)
Prefer Not to Disclose	2 (2.1%)	
Year of Study, n (%)		
Undergraduate Year 1	6 (6.2%)	-
Undergraduate Year 2	32 (33.0%)	-
Undergraduate Year 3	23 (23.7%)	-
Undergraduate Year 4	23 (23.7%)	-
Undergraduate Year 5+/Graduated	7 (7.2%)	-
Master's Year 1	-	9 (11.1%)
Master's Year 2	-	25 (30.9%)
Master's Year 3+	-	5 (6.2%)
Ph.D. Year 1	-	14 (17.3%)
Ph.D. Year 2	-	10 (12.3%)
Ph.D. Year 3	-	7 (8.6%)
Ph.D. Year 4	-	5 (6.2%)
Ph.D. Year 5	-	2 (2.5%)
Post-Doctoral Fellow	-	2 (2.5%)
Other	6 (6.2%)	2 (2.5%)
Program of Study		
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology	28 (28.9%)	-
Bachelor of Science in Psychology	59 (60.8%)	-
Clinical Psychology	-	41 (50%)
Counselling Psychology	-	11 (13.6%)
School or Educational Psychology	-	4 (4.9%)
Industrial/Organization Psychology	-	10 (12.3%)
Experimental or Applied Psychology	-	12 (14.8%)
Other	7 (10.3%)	3 (3.7%)

Table 2

Mentee and Mentor Program Effectiveness Ratings at 3-month Follow-up

	n (%) of Participants				
	Highly Ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Highly Effective
Mentees (*n* = 26)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	9 (34.6%)	10 (38.5%)	5 (19.2%)
Mentors (*n* = 43)	0	1 (2.3%)	15 (34.9%)	23 (53.5%)	4 (9.3%)

described benefiting from "gaining mentorship/leadership experience."

Although identified less frequently, other strengths that emerged through the analysis of narrative responses included mentee or mentor characteristics, such as mentors' enthusiasm, or the mentees' readiness for mentorship; and the flexibility allowed by the program in terms of the modest time commitment and ability to communicate through methods and at times that were convenient for both members of the dyad. A number of mentees also noted that mentors were very responsive and available to answer their questions quite rapidly.

Program weaknesses. A total of 10 program weaknesses emerged when categorizing mentor and mentee T2 responses. Weaknesses are summarized in Table 4.

Mentees and mentors alike identified that the geographic distance between dyads and the reliance on email rather than face-to-face meetings was a challenge. For instance, one participant reported that it was "hard to communicate very well via e-mail," while another respondent indicated that "cross-country distance can make it difficult to form relationships." Several mentors and mentees also felt that the lack of guidance or structure to the program was a weakness. One mentor described feeling that she "would have liked more information on mentoring functions; the guide is a good start, but more detail would be helpful," a thought similarly echoed by a second mentor who indicated "a lack of structure means there is not much communicating going on between mentor/mentee[s]." Mentees reported similar concerns regarding the lack of structure identified by the mentors, with mentees highlighting that "there is no set guideline about the information mentors can provide" and suggesting that "there could be a workshop organized and certain exercises or tasks so that people can get to know each other better and learn things." Several participants also identified the matching or fit of the peer-mentorship relationship as a weakness of the program. One mentor indicated that the "match between areas of knowledge/interest of mentor and mentee is not close enough at times," while a mentee felt that her mentor was not providing the information she needed.

Several mentors identified a lack of engagement on the part of the mentee, or a lack of clarity from mentees in terms of career goals as a challenge to the program. Mentors felt that the timing of the program was a challenge, noting that many of the major concerns for mentees (i.e., graduate school applications and funding applications) occur early in the academic year, leaving little time to prepare for these events, and little to speak about after these deadlines have passed. As well, several mentors felt that the program administration was a weakness, with respondents citing the speed of the matching process and infrequent contact from program administrators as problematic.

Lack of training in mentorship was a weakness noted by both mentees and mentors, although it was more commonly noted by mentees. For instance, one mentee stated "mentors could be better trained to give specifics on how to achieve career goals." Similarly, several mentees noted

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Table 3

Program Strengths Identified by Mentors and Mentees at 3-month Follow-up

Themes	% of Participants Identifying Strength			Sample Participant Quotations
	Total (n = 64)	Mentors (n = 39)	Mentees (n = 25)	
Networking/Connecting with Others in Discipline	45	56	28	• "Ability to work with someone outside your own discipline" [mentor] • "learning about another person's area of interest and the stage they are at in their academic (or professional) career" [mentee]
Personal Growth/Skill Development	38	46	24	• "The mentor can develop their leadership skills" [mentor] • "helps to motivate me to achieve my goals" [mentees]
Program Administration (e.g., matching, follow-up by administrators) and Nature (e.g., peer-to-peer, nationwide)	33	31	36	• "mentor guide was comprehensive and helpful" [mentor] • "matching people with their program goals" [mentor]
Pass on Knowledge and Contribute/Support Others	30	49	0	• "Offer opportunity to share knowledge" [mentor] • "being able to share experiences for students who may not have had a lot of contact with grad students" [mentor]
Access to Knowledge/Support from Someone Who Has Gone Through the Process	28	0	68	• "Provides a good contact for questions about applications" [mentee] • "Getting research advice" [mentee]
Mentor Availability/Responsiveness	16	0	40	• "get answers to questions quickly" [mentee] • "my mentor was always available to set up a chance to talk" [mentee]
Flexibility of Program (e.g., time commitment)	13	3	28	• "Independence when meeting with mentees" [mentor] • "flexible and easy to coordinate" [mentor]
Mentee/Mentor Characteristics	6	5	8	"student readiness for mentorship" [mentor] "awesome mentor" [mentee]

Note. Several respondents are counted under more than one theme as respondents could list up to three strengths.

that graduate programs differed across post-secondary institutions as well as across the country which made it difficult for mentors to provide specific advice. Other themes that emerged from mentor and mentee responses, although infrequently, included the limited frequency of contact with mentor/mentee, and the lack of networking opportunities beyond the peer dyad.

Mentee and Mentor Outcomes

Self-efficacy. A paired sample t-test comparing NGSES scores at T1 and T2 was conducted to evaluate the influence of the program on participants' self-reported self-efficacy. Mentors and mentee self-efficacy ratings were compared separately. Changes in self-efficacy were not observed in either group between T1 and T2.

Peer mentorship and achievement of career goals. Mentees were asked to rate how important they believed their mentor was in relation to achieving their career goals. At T2, the majority of mentees (63%) rated their mentor as being "somewhat important" or "extremely important" in relation to achieving careers goals, while 26% provided a neutral rating and 11% identified their mentor as "somewhat" or "extremely" unimportant. When mentors rated the impact of their mentorship on their mentees' career goals at T2, 30% believed that they had neither a positive or negative effect, 67% reported having a somewhat positive effect, and 2% reported having an extremely positive effect.

Mentors overwhelmingly identified serving as a mentor as being "somewhat important" or "extremely important" to achieving career goals, with 86% of respondents providing ratings in one of these two categories. Of the remaining mentors, 11.6% provided a neutral rating and only one mentor felt that the program was "somewhat unimportant" in achieving career goals.

Peer mentorship and personal growth. Both mentors and mentees were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt that being involved in the mentorship program fostered their personal growth. Among the 27 mentees who provided ratings at T2, 59% rated their mentor as "important" or "extremely important" in fostering personal growth, 26% provided a neutral rating, and 15% rated their mentor as "somewhat unimportant" or "extremely unimportant" in fostering personal growth.

Mentors were also asked to evaluate the degree to which their mentorship affected their mentees' personal growth. Mentors tended to underestimate the influence they were having on their mentees, when compared to mentee ratings. None of the 43 mentors who provided responses at T2 felt that they had no effect on their mentees' personal growth; however, 37% felt that they had neither a positive or negative effect on their mentees' personal growth. Only 2% reported having an extremely positive effect and 61% reported having a somewhat positive effect on their mentees' personal growth.

Mentors were asked to rate the effect that serving as a mentor had on their personal growth. None of the mentors reported a negative effect, 33% reported a neutral effect, and 67% reported a "somewhat positive" or "positive" effect on their personal growth.

Mentorship functioning. Domains of mentorship functioning were examined at T2 among mentees. In general, mentees reported receiving high vocational support, psychosocial support, and good role modeling in their mentorship relationship. Within these areas, the vocational support domain was rated most highly, which is consistent with the aim of the peer-mentoring program as a career intervention.

Discussion

Peer-mentorship provides an excellent opportunity for professional development within the higher education context. The CPA Student Mentorship Program was created to enhance the career trajectories of psychology students in Canada. The purpose of the program was to afford undergraduate students the opportunity to gain support and guidance from graduate students in navigating and negotiating important career decisions. This investigation aimed to address limitations identified in previous research (e.g., insufficient evidence sup-

Table 4

Program Weaknesses Identified by Mentors and Mentees at 3-month Follow-up

Themes	% of Participants Identifying Weakness			Sample Participant Quotations
	Total (n = 54)	Mentors (n = 34)	Mentees (n = 20)	
Distance/Email Communication	31	29	35	• "mentorship through e-mail isn't successful" [mentor] • "proximity to mentor (maybe would have been nice to meet them in person)" [mentee]
Lack of Program Structure/Guidance	30	29	30	• "some sample topics of discussion would be great" [mentor] • "not a lot of activities for the mentor-mentee pair to do" [mentee]
Matching Fit/Relationship Development	20	21	20	• "Potential for lack of fit between mentor and mentee (e.g., my mentee is not interested in a career in psychology, thereby limiting my ability to use my graduate school experience to assist her)" [mentor] • "mentor does not tell me what they whished they knew" [mentee]
Lack of Mentor Support/Mentorship Training	11	6	20	• "Mentors could be better trained to give specifics on how to achieve career goals" [mentee] • "Could provide some basic info to mentors if mentees have questions outside of our area (e.g., other grad programs besides clinical psychology" [mentor]
Programming Differences Across the Country	9	3	20	• "not in the same program" [mentee] • "since my mentor did not graduate from the same university as me it is a bit hard to get specific advice about the honours thesis pertaining to my school" [mentee]
Limited Mentee Engagement or Awareness of Career Goals	9	15	0	• " mentee only contacted me once" [mentor] • "mentees may change their focus to non-psych programs/careers" [mentor]
Timing of Mentorship Program	9	12	5	• "If it started earlier in the year there would be more time to help mentees prepare for applications/GREs/etc." [mentor] • "started late so less time to mentor students prior to applications being submitted" [mentor]
Program Administration	7	12	0	• "no reply from the program assistant" [mentor] • "more reminders would be helpful" [mentor]
Infrequent Contact with Paired Peer	7	9	5	• "could be more ongoing – mentors should check in more often" [mentee] • "my mentee was relatively low-maintenance, therefore would have been nice to have more mentees to work with"
Lack of Networking Opportunities	6	6	5	• "provide more networking opportunities" [mentor] • "a chance for mentors to speak and share resources would be useful" [mentor]

Note. Several respondents are counted under more than one theme as respondents could list up to three weaknesses.

porting the effectiveness of formal, peer-mentoring programs in psychology; limited research on mentor outcomes), in addition to exploring participants' interest in and feasibility and acceptability of the program, as well as its strengths, limitations, and outcomes. Consistent with research which suggests that peer-mentoring is beneficial for both mentors and mentees (Allen, 2007; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Shockley, 2005), many themes emerged in the present evaluation which supported the effectiveness of the program. While most mentors (63%) and mentees (58%) reported that the peer-mentoring program was effective, 100% of participants were supportive of the continuation of the program. Overall, mentors (86%) and mentees (63%) reported that participation in the program was positively related to the achievement of their career goals and personal growth.

The CPA Student Mentorship Program, a national program which spurred student interest and participation from across Canada, is a valuable resource for emerging psychologists at various stages in their educational training. Psychology students are faced with a plethora of challenging decisions and, through peer-mentorship, this program aimed to address a current gap in vocational supports which are often unavailable to university student populations. The need for a formal program which was individualized for psychology students was demonstrated through the substantive number of participants who expressed interest in and who were matched in the mentoring program. Supported with theoretical underpinnings, the program was designed to reach and pair a wide range of students with diverse interests in psychology in peer-mentoring relationships. In addition to providing growth and exploration opportunities to mentees (e.g., information-sharing, role modeling), the program also offered mentors similar professional development experiences (e.g., self-discovery, networking). This evaluation makes an important contribution to the peer-mentoring literature, particularly for those individuals or groups who are interested in developing similar programs to affect positive outcomes for post-secondary students.

Positive Global Experiences

Results determined that there was sufficient interest from both mentors and mentees for a formal, peer-mentoring program for psychology students. Program participation appeared to be largely feasible for students, as per the successful matching of students with shared goals and interests in psychology. While nearly three quarters of them discontinued their participation prior to the cessation of the program (i.e., did not complete T3 measures), the program's acceptability was demonstrated through participants' unanimous support of its continuation at T2. Additionally, the program was deemed effective by nearly two thirds of mentors and mentees.

In terms of the program's general impact, mentors and mentees did not report a positive change in self-efficacy throughout the duration of the program; however, both groups reported an improvement in their achievement of career goals and personal growth. Notably, a significant percentage of mentors (86%) reported that their role as a mentor was central to achieving career goals, suggesting that service as a mentor is a desirable leadership experience enhancing graduate student training in psychology. Sixty-seven percent of mentors reported that their service as a mentor positively influenced their own personal growth. In contrast, 63% of mentees reported that mentors played a significant role in relation to achieving their career goals, while 59% reported that mentors facilitated their personal growth. Interestingly, mentors rated the program more positively and consistently reported advances in the areas of career goals and personal growth, in comparison to mentees. While these findings are in line with the programs' intended objectives of advancing career and personal development, this program may offer more benefits than expected for mentors, contributing an important result to the limited mentor outcome literature.

Mentees reported receiving all three types of mentorship support including those pertaining to the career, psychosocial, and role modeling functions. As per the nature of the peer-mentoring program as a career inter-

vention, vocational support was experienced most frequently.

Findings indicate that the program had positive implications for both mentors and mentees. The top three program strengths identified by mentors included the opportunity to connect and network with peers in psychology, contribute knowledge and support to others, and advance personal and professional skills. These findings support previous research which suggested that mentors achieve personal satisfaction from passing knowledge on to others (Milner & Bosser, 2005), improved professional skills and personal growth (Allen, 2007; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Kram, 1985) . The top three strengths identified by mentees included the opportunity to connect with and learn from a mentor who had increased knowledge and experience in psychology, mentors' availability and openness, and the administration and nature of the program. These findings corroborate Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent's (2004) results which suggest that discussion with mentors (e.g., sharing information, receiving advice) and positive mentor characteristics (e.g., warmth, openness) are common mentee outcomes resulting from mentorship programs in educational settings.

It is important to note that, in addition to the mentor functions described above, mentoring is a relationship which develops over time and each relationship is unique to the individuals involved. According to Keller (2005), there are five stages through which the mentoring relationship evolves including contemplation, initiation, growth and maintenance, decline, and redefinition. In the present investigation, each mentoring dyad likely worked in the various stages of the mentoring relationship, with some progressing farther than others, thereby impacting the mentoring outcomes. While the degree to which this occurred in the present study is unknown, future research examining the stages of development regarding the mentoring relationship and the associated outcomes is warranted.

Aspects to Improve

A number of challenges with the program were found. The high dropout rate, particularly amongst mentees, was an area of concern. The narrative finding through which participants identified the timing of the program as problematic may help explain the degree of attrition which occurred. It is possible that mentees utilized their peer-mentoring relationships up until the time of multiple important academic deadlines (e.g., graduate school applications, funding applications), while subsequently disengaging from mentorship activities. This perspective is further elucidated by the result which identified the most common mentoring function utilized within the peer-mentoring dyads (i.e., career support), suggesting that, after career support around specific goals or deadlines was received, mentees may no longer require or benefit from mentorship that was necessary or advantageous to their career and personal development. A possible solution to address program retention may entail commencing the program at an earlier time during the academic year (e.g., prior to the fall semester when graduate school and funding applications are typically due) so that participants are afforded sufficient time to prepare for these important deadlines. Additionally, due to substantial attrition, the peer-mentoring program may benefit from decreasing its duration (e.g., from six months to three months) which may positively influence program retention.

Whereas some participants reported strengths of the program (i.e., gaining mentorship in an area of high importance) and the program's administration (e.g., matching, level of administrator involvement), others felt that the program was lacking structure, guidance, and support from program administrators. The latter findings support Vance and Olson's (1998) results from an evaluation of a formal peer-mentoring program with a sample of nursing students and graduates, suggesting a need to improve the fit between mentors and mentees, as well as a need to increase program structure and institutional (administrative) support. Possible program modifications to the CPA Student Mentorship Program may include optional components (available but not mandatory for participation) which offer more structure including worksheets/activities to

be completed in dyads to facilitate the peer-mentoring relationship and to serve as a springboard for discussion, in addition to webinars or in-person mentorship trainings (e.g., at the CPA Annual Convention).

Additionally, the predetermined matching procedure may have to be reconsidered to include criteria such as geographical location, the possibility of in-person meetings, and academic program similarities, as these were also identified as program weaknesses which may be improved through more efficacious matching processes. Particularly, qualitative responses from mentees pointed to a discomfort with the semi-structured program format, suggesting that the student-centered learning approach (Rogers, 1961) which encouraged dyads to individualize and self-direct their peer-learning, may not translate well to a formal program which does not occur in a face-to-face capacity or relies more deeply on directive tasks (e.g., information giving). Alternatively, this finding may reflect mentees' resistance to self-initiating their learning or a lack of engagement in the mentoring process, as reported by mentors.

Implications for the Broader Peer-mentoring Context

Universities and colleges across North America are increasingly seeking alternative approaches to learning and education which supplement traditional classroom learning (Colvin & Askman, 2010). A common method utilized by post-secondary institutions involves mentorship, including formal and informal, traditional (hierarchical) and peer mentoring pairings and programs, yielding a host of benefits for those involved (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Leidenfrost, et al., 2011). The CPA Student Mentorship Program offered a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to be paired with graduate students in formal, peer-mentoring relationships. Findings from the present study confirm the need and desire for a formalized mentorship program in the higher education context which neutralizes power dynamics through peer collaboration, enhancing student-centered learning, career development, and personal growth. Furthermore, peer-mentoring, as demonstrated by the CPA Student Mentorship Program, served as an important career intervention which assisted diverse individuals to explore personally meaningful and professionally relevant career decisions.

The program's focus on advanced training and career opportunities in psychology made it a novel and valuable resource for students. Given the high degree of interest for a program in the psychology domain, it is likely that students in related disciplines (e.g., sociology, occupational therapy) may also be keen to pursue participation in a similar program aimed at improving student outcomes and career development in their chosen field of study. Indeed, findings from the present study suggest that formalized peer mentorship may be beneficial for mentees in receiving vocational and psychosocial support as they progress to the next stage in their training or career; however, peer-mentoring programs should also consider individual academic deadlines within a given field to allow participants the opportunity to engage in mentorship to their full potential. Results also revealed that serving as a mentor appeared to be of particular interest to graduate students in the higher education context and that this experience was considered to be an important training/growth opportunity for individuals prior to entering the job market.

Developing and evaluating a mentorship program is a complex task. A plethora of factors must be considered and challenging decisions about the objectives of the program should be established in advance. Methodological rigor is required to advance our understanding of the impact of formal peer-mentoring programs, but this, in itself, is not sufficient (Jacobi, 1991). An additional problem pertains to the fact that many mentoring programs are so diverse that they may have little in common. Characteristic of the present evaluation was its focus on mentoring functions; however, there are many other variables that could be addressed when assessing the relative success of a mentoring program. Some of these factors include the characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships such as differences or similarities in participants' age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as the duration, in-

timacy or intensity, and format of the mentoring relationship. The mentor-mentee matching process and subsequent relationship is immensely complex and a good "fit" likely influences participants' experiences and outcomes. Until we observe greater consistency in the definitions, objectives, and components of mentoring programs, it is unlikely that we can weave together a coherent thread of research supporting the use and effectiveness of mentorship programs. Nevertheless, continuous efforts, including the present investigation, are being made to better identify what works about peer-mentoring, what doesn't, and why, affording a valuable contribution to mentorship literature.

Limitations and Future Directions

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of a formal peer-mentoring program which was exploratory in nature. Because this program was focused in psychology in Canada, its findings may not generalize to other disciplines or professional associations. Limitations of the current study pertain to the absence of information regarding the online mediums used for communication purposes among mentoring dyads, the types of activities that participants pursued, the time spent engaged in these activities, and the mentorship functions associated with them. Additionally, process variables related to the mentoring relationship were not explored in depth. Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) suggested that research should continue to assess the impact of specific characteristics, namely the nature of mentoring relationships (e.g., length of time spent with a mentor). While we know that the mentoring function most commonly utilized in the program regards the career support function, it would be helpful to learn what types of conversations or activities were discussed and implemented. Other curious considerations regard the trend that more mentees dropped out of the program than mentors, possibly suggesting that mentors were benefiting more from the program or that they sustained increased commitment to their peer-mentoring relationship. Future research investigations should address these discrepancies in more detail, in addition to exploring the sizable personal growth experienced by mentors, as described in their qualitative responses.

Links to Social Cognitive Career Theory

According to SCCT, individuals' must have articulated interests in order to acquire a meaningful career. Interests are best realized through engaging in significant learning experiences which can contribute to individuals' sense of personal effectiveness and competence. SCCT assumes that individuals acquire interest in, choose to pursue, and perform better at activities in which they hold strong self-efficacy beliefs. Consequently, as individuals develop interest in an activity or career, they tend to develop goals for maintaining or increasing their involvement in it. Further engagement in activities of interest enable subsequent mastery or failure experiences, which impact individuals' self-efficacy and outcome expectations, ultimately leading to the revision of one's career interests. The CPA Student Mentorship Program aimed to facilitate unique learning experiences which provided opportunities to explore career interests, form positive expectations, and develop greater self-efficacy within a collaborative and supportive peer-mentoring relationship. The social nature of this career intervention allowed mentors to provide individualized feedback about mentees' personal accomplishments, vicarious experiences, and emotional states, thereby affording a compelling source of self-efficacy information.

Opportunities to explore outcome expectations including the consequences of pursing particular behaviours or actions were also provided. Participants were invited to explore their intentions to engage in specific actions or activities which would enhance their career development, including goal-setting. By setting collaborative goals, participants were better able to organize their behaviour and plan steps towards achieving their personal career objectives. Although participants' in the current investigation did not demonstrate statistically significant changes in self-efficacy, both mentors and mentees

reported improvements in their achievement of career goals and personal growth. From the SCCT perspective, participants may not have engaged in experiences that were potent enough for them to alter their sense of self-efficacy, although they were able to take steps towards achieving their personal and professional goals. In order for participants to form enduring interests leading to shifts in self-efficacy, it will be important to increase opportunities within the mentoring dyad for them to view themselves as competent. Modifying the structure of the program to include more learning experiences aimed at exploring and strengthening one's self-efficacy is paramount. Finally, highlighting the positive possibilities associated with one's career interests will also likely influence participants' expectations that the activity will produce or be related to affirmative outcomes.

Conclusions

The CPA Student Mentorship Program offered a worthwhile experience for students, affording novel opportunities to gain career and psychosocial support in an expansive and diverse field that is psychology. While many previously developed peer-mentorship programs are a-theoretical, the present investigation aimed to contribute new knowledge about a formal peer-mentoring program for psychology students which had a strong theoretical foundation (i.e., student-centered learning, SCCT), drawn from the broader humanistic psychology and career development literature. Practical implications of this research suggest that, overall, mentors and mentees found that the peer-mentorship program was a valuable and positive experience, was effective in enhancing career and personal growth, and should be continued. University administrators, psychology departments or other professional associations wishing to develop their own peer-mentoring programs can benefit from this investigation which offers results unique to psychology students pursuing higher education in Canada.

Consistent with the mentoring literature, most mentors and mentees derived some benefits associated with their participation in the program. The formal peer-mentoring model was perceived as useful to participants and reflected gains by mentors (and mentees), advancing knowledge on mentor outcomes. The strengths and limitations which were identified serve as a gauge of the program's current functioning, pointing to an array of modifications which could improve future iterations of the program. In summary, this research makes an important contribution to the peer-mentoring literature, while providing a feasible career intervention for psychology students who are seeking support and guidance in navigating essential career decision-making and personal and professional development.

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Creating a Lifelong Career Development Model

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Abstract

A limitation of current theoretical knowledge in youth's career exploration is the incomplete research regarding how career exploration needs change developmentally and the impact of career interventions over time. Research has often focused on career-related indicators and/or the outcomes of a particular intervention within one developmental time frame. There has been less attention paid to the developmental characteristics of the intervention, the relationship between the intervention and environmental influences, and the linkages between theoretical constructs, differences in developmental stages, and how these may impact the intervention.

Information on career self-efficacy, interests, and outcome expectancies, and environmental influences was collected from a sample of students spanning grades 5-12. Findings suggest that Grade 7 and 8 students are more engaged in career decision-making than high school students. The impact of a career development intervention (Career Trek Inc) was analyzed and found to have significant positive impacts on career decision-making in Grades 7 and 8.

Over the past number of years, there has been a shift toward a more focused exploration of the theoretical tenets that inform children's career development. Traditional models that described career planning as a static and linear process have shifted toward frameworks that encompass developmental, contextual, and temporal perspectives. Whereas historical models of career development conceptualized the young adult stage as the critical point in which to provide career information, currently there is much greater recognition of the relevance and complexity of career exploration processes in childhood (Howard, Flanagan, Castine, & Walsh, 2015). It is at this time that children undertake major cognitive, behavioural, and emotional developments with a view toward achieving greater independence, and there have been significant gains in identifying the factors that influence children's decision-making processes. Consequently, there is greater demand for a more comprehensive understanding of how career interests and vocational identities are formed, develop, and change during this stage (Gysbers, 1996; Schultheiss, Palma, & Manzi, 2005).

The social and economic burden of unfulfilled potential is not equitably distributed: Although many youth have access to educational, family, informational, financial, and social support that can facilitate effective career exploration, other children are not as fortunate. Children from low-income families, children of parents with little or no post-secondary education, children from families that do not value post-secondary education, and Indigenous children have considerably less access to this type of assistance (Council of Ministers of Education, 2015; Helme, 2010).

Early intervention programs are based on the position that targeted services can compensate children who are considered vulnerable to poor outcomes later in life, based on a variety of factors. Engaging children and their families in structured experiences that are perceived to meet the identified risk, at a developmental stage when there is significant potential for change, can have a positive impact. At the child level, these programs can address a range of dimensions including school readiness skills that can facilitate long-term school, career, and economic success. For parents, having their child participate in an early intervention career exploration program provides the

opportunity to identify key discussion topics that can reinforce the program model, and facilitate their child's career exploration in the "real world." Improving the career development prospects for at-risk youth has significant implications for their personal and familial well- being, as post-secondary education remains a key protective factor against living in poverty. More broadly, the political, social, and economic contexts of society will benefit from the inclusion of marginalized youth into the mainstream employment sector.

This study explored children's career exploration within a conceptual framework that integrates developmental models (Super, 1953) and contextual factors of family, peer, and school relationships. Our intent was to develop a broader understanding of the relationships between grade level and developmental indicators of career exploration. Specific objectives include examining: a) career as a developmental process over the Growth and Exploration stages (Super, 1990); and b) the impact of a career awareness program, Career Trek, on the developmental trajectory of Grade 6 children's career exploration. Our research hypotheses were:

1. Students in senior years (Grades 9-12) would exhibit higher career exploration behaviours than students in middle years (Grades 7-8) and elementary years (Grades 5-6).
2. Perceived career–related parental involvement would increase as children progressed in grades, as youth in high school are approaching graduation, and engaging in a process of active career exploration in preparation for next steps.
3. Children who participated in a career exploration program would score higher on indicators of career decision-making indicators compared to a group that did not.

Life Span, Life Space Theory

Our conceptual framework was drawn from the Life Span, Life Space theory of careers (Super, 1990; Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown, & Niles, 1992). According to Hartung (2013), this theory combines three areas of psychological research: differential psychology, developmental psychology, and self-concept theory. By combining these three areas, Super created a model that focuses on work value traits and how individuals develop ideas about who they are in different roles and situations and how they cultivate a career over time. Beginning in childhood and extending throughout the lifespan, individuals progress through comprehensive ways of making sense of themselves and their educational and career experiences. Super's (1980) major contribution is in his description of career exploration as a developmental process characterized by change and adaptation. The model emphasizes how career exploration and decision-making are ongoing processes, and evolve over time in response to changing factors within individuals' immediate environments and different social contexts.

His model consists of nine dimensions thought to contribute to career development: curiosity, exploration, information, key figures, interests, locus of control, time perspective, self-concept, and planfulness (Schultheiss, Palma, & Manzi, 2005). These dimensions unfold throughout five life stages: Growth (Birth-14), Exploration (15-24), Establishment (25-44), Maintenance (45-64), and Disengagement (65+). Each stage is characterized by sub-stages that include socially and culturally determined responsibilities that individuals must meet with regard to developing a career (Super et al., 1992).

Two stages in Super's model encompass the elementary, middle, and high school years. The Growth stage spans birth to age 14, which corresponds with the end of the middle school years in Canada (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondrecek, 2005). The key task is for children to develop their self-concept by actively constructing ways of making sense of themselves and the world, primarily through their interactions with adults, as well as an understanding of their attitudes toward education and the general world of work. This initial period includes forming a preliminary but realistic vocational self-concept. Other tasks include developing concern for their future, control over their

decision-making, conviction to succeed, and competence in work habits and attitudes (Savickas & Super, 1993).

Growth gives way to Exploration, which spans the ages of 15 to 24. Key developmental tasks include enhancing intrinsic motivation; acquiring a sense of competence; cultivating strong interpersonal and citizenship skills; and recognizing the importance of a future orientation. Although Super's theory does not specifically address issues related to diversity, the social context of the 21st century has changed, and career development theories must incorporate these considerations. Therefore, we would add that understanding career development in a social context that integrates cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity is an integral component of the Exploration stage.

Career-related tasks focus on the examination and consideration of different careers prior to committing to a particular direction through crystallizing, specifying, and implementing the vocational self-concept in an occupational role (Arnett, 2004). Given the premise that as children develop into adolescents and young adults and move from a growth to an exploration stage in their career awareness, the influence of the nine dimensions on career development may change. As children consolidate their ideas about careers, the need to obtain further information or test out different possibilities becomes less important, and the shift toward implementing plans takes priority. The rationale for our approach to comparing career exploration knowledge at different ages and grades is to expand our understanding of children's career development by shifting from a focus at a particular stage to discerning transitions within a temporal context.

Contextual Factors

Career exploration in children and adolescents must be conceptualized within the social contexts that consist of family, peer, and school relationships. Research has consistently revealed that parental supports, peer relationships, and school factors such as academic engagement, teacher relationships and support, and sense of school belonging affect career development through a number of pathways.

Beginning in the 1960s, a substantive body of research resulted in the unequivocal conclusion that parental and family factors are the key predictors of young adults' career choices (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Parental influence is manifest via a wide range of family process variables including: attachment relationships, parental authority, parent-child communication, child-centred parenting, affective expression, and academic expectations (Dietrich, Kracke, & Nurmi, 2011; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009; Ketterson & Blustein, 1997; Kracke, 2002; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994; Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glasscock, 2001).

Parental involvement in children's career exploration and decision-making may be described in the domains of attitudes, actions, behaviours, and responses. Each of these suggests one of three dimensions: positive involvement, negative involvement, and non-involvement. Positive involvement includes both relational support factors (emotional connectedness and parental warmth), as well as instrumental support factors (encouraging children to explore their career choices, discussing career aspirations, and providing advice and information). For example, Lease & Dahlbeck (2009) found that secure parental attachment predicted career decision making self-efficacy. Negative involvement refers to active interference such as empathy failures, criticism of career choices, or coercing children to pursue particular careers (Middleton & Loughead, 1993). Non-involvement describes the absence of parental engagement and is expressed by parents' refusal to initiate or engage in discussions with children about career interests, the absence of understanding regarding children's desires to explore particular careers, and the belief that parental involvement may be detrimental to children's career exploration (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Douglas & Guttman, 2000; Hoffman, Hofacker, & Goldsmith, 1992; Levine & Sutherland, 2013; Middleton & Loughead, 1993). Peer relationships provide similar contributions to adolescents' career exploration including attachment

and emotional connections (Felsman & Blustein, 1999) as well as critical course and college-related information (Kracke, 2002). Having a friend whose parents are college educated can expose adolescents whose parents did not attend college, to essential information that can facilitate post-secondary entrance (Crosnoe & Muller, 2014).

School connectedness or sense of belonging, which may be defined as students' positive perceptions of teachers, principals, courses, and the school itself, has received less attention in the career exploration research literature. There is, however, research that supports a positive relationship between school connectedness and future orientation (Crespo, Jose, Kielpikowski, & Pryo, 2013), a key consideration in the temporal context of Super's Life-Space theory.

Career Interventions

There has been increased interest on the part of educators, academics, labour market specialists, and federal/provincial policy analysts in career intervention models for youth. This is based on the premise that if students are able to learn and understand the connections between school and future work or career outcomes, they will become more academically engaged and therefore more likely to graduate (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Career interventions for youth operate at the individual, school, and community levels and are intended to address career exploration needs at the developmental, preventive, or remedial stages. At a school level, there are both required and elective career development courses offered in different grades. Community-based programs include events such as Career Days that bring together high school students, post-secondary institutions, and employers to showcase the range of career possibilities along with the educational pathways to those careers. Online career interventions use interactive methods such as multimedia video, content slides, and information modules along with discussion groups and counselling exchanges in which students can explore possible careers (Nota, Santilli, & Soresi, 2016). In addition to general programs, there are career intervention models that have been designed to instill interest in particular disciplines and to address the needs of particular populations. The information technology demands of the 21st century have generated multiple programs to expose youth to the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) subject areas (Byars-Winston, 2014) and domain-specific programs focused on health sciences and related fields (Ali, Brown, & Loh, 2017). There are also career interventions developed for marginalized populations who may require additional support including minority youth (Jackson et al., 2011; Turner & Conkel, 2010), young mothers (Prescod & Daire, 2013) and youth with disabilities (Chen & Chan, 2014; Sheftel, Lindstrom, & McWhirter, 2014).

The Career Trek Program

In contrast to career courses that typically begin in high school, Career Trek is an early intervention, social inclusion initiative targeted toward students who, due to social, economic, or family structure disadvantages, may not successfully transition to post-secondary education after graduation. Its mandate is to increase students' and families' knowledge about potential careers that are accessible through post-secondary education by: a) using an integrated approach to experiential career exposure; b) providing information about post-secondary educational institutions; and c) encouraging parental involvement in children's career decision-making choices.

Each year, over 240 children in grades 5 and 6, who appear to require additional academic and/or social supports, are identified by educators as candidates for the Career Trek program. Program criteria include low socioeconomic status, parents or siblings who have not completed high school, minority or immigrant status, single-parent family, and absence of involvement in extra-curricular activities. In Winnipeg, the program operates on 20 Saturdays beginning in October and ending in April with the program's graduation ceremony. Students are transported from several pick-up locations throughout the city, and taken to one of the four participating urban post-secondary educational institutions: the Univer-

sity of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, Red River College, and the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology. All participants rotate through 5 weeks of programming at each institution. The program curriculum is designed to expose students to the wide variety of careers that are accessible via post-secondary education, as well as a broad range of careers within each discipline/subject. For example, a major in Economics may lead to careers in policy analysis, managing a non-profit enterprise, or serve as a pre-requisite to a business degree. Participating faculties/departments range from Engineering, Nursing, Native Studies, and Education to Graphic Design, Culinary Arts, Creative Communications, and Building Construction. Current post-secondary students from the various departments act as instructors for the sessions. As part of the experiential component, participants learn the long-term connections between their current Grade 5 and 6 subjects and each career. For example, math concepts have greater relevance when they are used to determine the amount of medication a patient requires, or how to ensure that the walls of a dog house are of equal size.

Methodology

Participants

1493 students from grades 5-12 from four school divisions in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada participated. Participants were grouped into early years (Grades 5-6), middle years (Grades 7-8), and senior years (Grades 9-12).

Students in these divisions represent the full range of cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, family composition, and socio-economic diversity that exists in Winnipeg (Statistics Canada, 2015). In order to solicit as large a sample as possible, data on demographic factors were not collected as research has often resulted in negative portrayals of individual groups in the absence of a contextual analysis (Morton & Pollock, 2017).

Procedures

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, as well as from each of the participating school divisions. The school divisions had long established partnerships with Career Trek so were receptive to supporting the project. Individual school recruitment was facilitated by school superintendents.

Research assistants (RAs) contacted the school administration and arranged times to meet with the students. Parental consent was obtained for all participants. All data were collected within a two-month time frame (January – February). Working in pairs, RAs visited each school twice. The first visit was to share information about the study and distribute parental consent forms. They then returned to the school approximately two – three days later to administer the measures to the students. Data were entered into SPSS 20.

Measures

Given the age range of participants, study measures were selected based upon their reliability with younger students. The following three data collection instruments were used: Childhood Career Development Scale (CCDS) (Schultheiss & Stead, 2004): The CCDS (Schultheiss & Stead, 2004) was designed to assess children's career development across the nine proposed dimensions of Super's (1990) developmental theory. The scale contains eight subscales (a) information (an awareness of the importance or use of occupational information and how one acquires this information); (b) curiosity/exploration (a need leading to inquisitive behaviour and activities such as searching or examining that elicit information about oneself or one's environment in an attempt to meet curiosity needs); (c) interests (an awareness of one's likes and dislikes); (d) locus of control (the degree to which one feels an internal sense of control over one's present and future); (e) key figures (role models or interesting or helpful people who have played a meaningful role in individuals' lives); (f) time perspective (an awareness of how the past, present, and future can be employed to plan future events); (g) planfulness (an awareness of the importance of planning); and (h) self-concept (an awareness of dimensions of

the self in some role, situation, or position; performing some set of functions; or in some web of relationships). The 52 items are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Family, Friends, and School Climate (Texas Christian University, 1998): The FFS is used to assess the psychosocial functioning of children within the domains of family, peers, and school settings. It is comprised of three subscales: the Family Relation scale (22 items) that assesses the factors of parental warmth, control, and conflict; the Peer Activity scale (23 items), that assesses the dimensions of peer activities, peers in trouble; peers' familiarity with parents; and peers' conventional involvement, and a Self scale (15 items) that measures the psychological dimensions of self-esteem, environment, and school satisfaction.

Parental/Guardian Involvement Checklist (Keller & Whiston, 2008): Perceived parental/guardian involvement was assessed using a 53 item composite measure adapted from the Career Behaviour Checklist (Keller & Whiston, 2008) that assesses parental behaviours that are predictive of children's career decision making self-efficacy and career maturity. The first subscale, Career Support, includes 13 items that target parental, social and emotional support related to career exploration. The second subscale, Career Action, consists of 39 items that assess specific, career oriented actions and behaviour undertaken by parents/caregivers in relation to their child's career exploration. Participants respond to each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never to 5 = Often) that describes their perceptions of the extent to which their parent/caregiver engages in these activities.

Results

Grade Related Differences in Career Development

Our first objective was to explore how children's career development knowledge changes from the early to middle, and middle to high school years when they have not experienced a career development intervention. To meet this objective, grade related differences were explored by excluding all respondents who identified as having participated in any Career Development Program. Individuals from grades 3 and 4 (6 individuals) and individuals where grade was unknown (42 individuals) were removed from the analysis.

Childhood Career Development Scale

ANOVAs were done to test for grade differences on the subscales of the CCDS (Table 1). The higher the score the more participants agreed with the statements. Post hoc Bonferroni tests were conducted to determine the significance of the group differences. Grade levels significantly differed in two of the nine subscales. The Information subscale was significant for different grade groups $F(2, 1302) = 3.01$, $p < 0.05$, as grades 5-6 ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .86$) and 7-8 ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .86$) students wanted more information than high school students ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .77$). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 were significant using Bonferroni post hoc tests, $p < 0.04$. The Locus of Control subscale was significant for different grade groups $F(2, 1299) = 3.18$, $p < 0.04$, as grades 5-6 ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .97$) and 7-8 ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.04$) students felt they had more personal control over how well they do and their relationships than high school students ($M = 1.68$, $SD = .73$). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 were significant using Bonferroni post hoc tests, $p < 0.04$. No differences were found for the curiosity/exploration, interests, key figures, planfulness, and self-concept subscales.

Family, Friends and School Climate (TCU/PMES)

ANOVAs were done to test for grade differences on the subscales of the TCU/PMES Scales on Family, Friends and Self. For the family subscale, higher scores indicated more of the reported behaviours or events.

Family Relation Subscale: The parental warmth subscale was significantly different for different grade groups $F(2, 1287) = 41.88$, $p < 0.00$. High school students reported less parental warmth ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .80$) than either the elemen-

Table 1.

Distribution of the student respondents by grade.

GRADE	*N*=1493
3-6	6
5-6	854
7-8	422
9-12	217

tary (M = 3.21, SD =.64) or the middle school (M = 3.18, SD =.71) students. Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 and grades 9-12 and 7-8 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.00.

The parental control subscale was significantly different for different grade groups F(2, 1287) = 3.51, p < 0.03. High school students reported less parental control within their family (M = 2.81, SD =.58) than did either the elementary (M = 2.89, SD =,57) or middle school students (M = 2.94, SD =.49). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 7-8 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.03.

The conflict subscale was significantly different for different grade groups F(2, 1441) =7.08, p <0.00. High school students reported more conflict within their family (M = 1.50, SD =.84) than did either the elementary (M = 1.27, SD =.90) or middle school students (M = 1.20, SD=.84). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 and grades 9-12 and 7-8 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.00.

Peer Activity Scale: For the friends section of this measure higher responses indicated more of the reported behaviour or events. The subscale on the number of friends getting into trouble was significantly different for different grade groups F(2, 1267) =15.04, p <0.00. High schools students reported more of their friends getting into trouble (M = 0.53, SD =.56) than either the elementary school students (M=0.31, SD =.51) or the middle school students (M= 0.31, SD =.46). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 and grades 9-12 and 7-8 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.00.

The subscale on friends familiarity with parents was significantly different for different grade groups F(2, 1271) =14.24, p <.000. Both middle school (M = 2.95, SD =.83) and high school (M = 2.80, SD =.85) students reported that their friends were less familiar with their parents than did elementary school students (M = 3.13, SD =.78). Mean differences between grades 5-6 and 9-12 and grades 7-8 and 9-12 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.00.

The conventional involvement subscale was significantly different for different grade groups F(2, 1270) = 26.32, p <0.00. High school students (M = 2.14, SD =) reported that their friends had less conventional activity involvement than did elementary (M = 2.50, SD =.58) or middle school students (M= 2.49, SD =.59). Mean differences between grades 9-12 and 5-6 and grades 9-12 and 7-8 were significant using the Bonferroni post hoc test, p <0.00. There were no differences on the peer activity level subscale.

Self Scale: For the "Self" section of this measure, higher scores indicated greater happiness with aspects of the student's life. The self-esteem subscale was significantly different for the different grade groups F(2, 1283) = 12.46, p <0.00. High school students had the lowest self-esteem scores (M = 2.79, SD =.79) and this was lower than the elementary school students' self-esteem (M = 3.09, SD =.70) and the middle school students' self-esteem (M = 3.04, SD =.73). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that the mean difference between the grade 9-12 grade group and the 5-6 grade group was significant and the 9-12 grade group and the 7-8 grade group was significant, p <0.00.

The family environment subscale was significantly differ-

Table 2:

Comparing responses to the Childhood Career Development Scale, TCU/PMES Scale and parent/Guardian Involvement Scale in the different Grade levels of youth who have not participated in any career development programming.

Measures	Grades 5 & 6		Grades 7 & 8		Grades 9-12				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	P<
Childhood Career Development Scale									
Information	2.16	0.86	2.13	0.86	1.98	0.77	3.01	2,1302	.05
Curiosity/Exploration	2.45	0.79	2.45	0.74	2.55	0.63	1.49	2,1303	.23
Interests	1.62	0.99	1.70	1.03	1.68	0.72	.873	2,1302	.42
Locus of Control	1.88	0.97	1.81	1.04	1.68	0.73	3.18	2,1299	.04
Key Figures	2.70	0.86	2.69	0.82	2.77	0.69	.508	2,1307	.60
Time Perspective	2.02	0.99	2.00	0.99	1.89	0.95	1.17	2,1295	.31
Planfulness	1.86	0.95	1.93	0.97	1.95	0.80	1.05	2,1295	.35
Self-Concept	1.83	0.96	1.90	0.99	1.85	0.76	.605	2,1291	.55
TCU/PMES Scales									
Family									
Warmth	3.21	0.64	3.18	0.71	2.70	0.80	41.90	2,1287	.00
Control	2.89	0.57	2.94	0.49	2.81	0.58	3.51	2,1285	.03
Conflict	1.27	0.90	1.20	0.84	1.50	0.84	7.08	2,1280	.00
Friends									
Peer Activity Level	2.59	0.84	2.48	0.87	2.59	0.79	2.20	2,1286	.11
Trouble	.31	0.51	0.31	0.46	0.53	0.56	15.04	2,1267	.00
Familiarity with Parents	3.13	0.78	2.95	0.83	2.80	0.85	14.24	2,1271	.00
Conventional Involvement	2.50	0.64	2.49	0.59	2.14	0.58	26.32	2,1270	.00
Self									
Self-Esteem	3.09	0.70	3.04	0.73	2.79	0.79	12.46	2,1283	.00
Environment	3.60	0.53	3.53	0.56	3.11	0.73	50.96	2,1268	.00
School Satisfaction	3.33	0.69	3.18	0.66	2.78	0.66	47.97	2,1268	.00
Parent Involvement									
Parent Support	3.98	0.67	4.07	0.66	3.78	0.68	11.48	2,1310	.00
Parent Action	2.67	0.72	2.83	0.73	2.64	0.65	7.11	2,1298	.00

ent for the different grade groups $F(2, 11268) = 50.96$, $p < 0.00$. High school students were the least happy with their family environment ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .73$), followed by middle school students ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .56$) and elementary school students ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .53$). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that the mean differences between the 5-6 grade group and the 9-12 grade group was significant, $p < 0.00$; and the difference between the 7-8 grade group and the 9-12 grade group was significant, $p < 0.00$.

The school satisfaction subscale was significantly different for the different grade groups, $F(2,1268) = 47.97$, $p < 0.00$. High school students had the least amount of school satisfaction ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .66$) followed by middle school students ($M = 3.18$, $SD = .66$) and elementary school students ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .69$). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that the mean difference between the 5-6 and the 9-12 grade groups was significant, $p < 0.00$; and the mean difference between grade group 7-8 was significantly different that the 9-12 grade group, $p < 0.00$.

Parent Guardian Involvement Checklist

The Parent/Guardian Involvement Checklist is divided into two subscales. Participants respond to each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale with higher scores indicating greater perceived parental/guardian career support or action. Career Support: Parent/guardian

career support significantly differed between the grade groups F(2, 1310) = 11.48, p <0.00. Middle school students perceived they had the greatest amount of parent/guardian career support (M = 4.07, SD =.68) followed by elementary students (M = 3.98, SD =.67) and high school students (M = 3.78, SD =.68). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that the mean difference between the 5-6 and the 9-12 grade groups was significant, p <0.00; and the mean difference between grade group 7-8 was significantly different than the 9-12 grade group, p <0.00.

Career Action: Parent/guardian career action significantly differed between the grade groups F(2, 1298) = 7.11, p <0.00. Middle school students perceived they had the greatest amount of parent/guardian career action (M = 2.83, SD =.73), followed by elementary students (M = 2.67, SD =.72) and then high school students (M = 2.64, SD =.65). Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that the mean difference between the 5-6 and the 7-8 grade groups was significant, p <0.00; and the mean difference between grade group 7-8 was significantly different than the 9-12 grade group, p <0.00.

Comparisons between Participants in a Career Development Intervention Program and Non-Participants

Our third objective was to explore the level of career development in middle school students who participated in a career development intervention compared with those who did not. This comparison was done by examining the career development levels of Career Trek participants that were currently attending the program with a comparable group of non-Career Trek participants (randomly selected from the Grade 5-6 respondents). In the Grade 5-6 Career Trek group participants had a maximum of four days of programming before completing a questionnaire

A further analysis examined the impact of Career Trek on students one year after participation with students who did not participate in a career development program (Table 3).

Comparison One Month into Programming

Childhood Career Development Scale: ANOVA results indicated that there were no program group differences in any of the subscales of the CCDS (Table 4).

TCU/PMES Scales on Family, Friends and Self: ANOVA results indicated that there were not program group differences in any of the subscales of the TCU/PMES scales. Parent/Guardian Involvement: Parental career support differed between the Career Trek and No Program Grade 5-6 participants. Parents/Guardians of Career Trek participants (M = 4.18, SD =.56) were more supportive than parents/guardians of non-participants (M = 3.81, SD =.71), F(1, 88) = 6.91, p <0.01. Parent/guardians career actions differed between the Career Trek and No Program Grade 5-6 participants as well. Parents/Guardians of Career Trek participants (M=3.01, SD =.64) were more active in their child's career development than parents/guardians of non-participants (M = 2.54, SD =.74), F(1,88) = 10.15, p < 0.00.

Career Intervention Comparison One Year Later

Childhood Career Development Scale: ANOVA results indicated that there were program group differences on the following subscales of the Childhood Career Development Scale (Table 5): a) Curiosity F(1,76) = 5.06, p < 0.03. The Career Trek Program (M = 2.62, SD =.84) students were more curious about things they learned in school than the No Program Group (M = 2.25, SD =.55); b) Interests F(1, 76) = 7.12, p < 0.01. The Career Trek Program (M = 1.94, SD =1.28) students were more aware of their interests in school than the No Program Group (M = 1.37, SD =.43); c) Locus of Control F(1, 76) = 4.56, p < 0.04. The Career Trek Program (M = 2.10, SD =1.26) students felt they had more control over their activities and school-related behaviours than did the No Program Group (M = 1.61, SD =.68); d) Planning F(1, 76) = 5.30, p < 0.02. The Career Trek Program (M = 2.14, SD =1.26) students felt that planning for the future was more im-

Table 3.

Post Hoc Bonferroni Tests to the Childhood Career Development Scale, TCU/PMES Scale and Parent/Guardian Involvement Scale in the different Grade levels of the No Career Development Program Group.

Scale	Grades 5-6 & 7-8 P<	Grades 5-6 & 9-12 P<	Grade 7-8 & 9-12 P<
Childhood Career Development Scale			
Information	1.00	0.04	0.18
Curiosity/Exploration	1.00	0.30	0.37
Interests	0.64	1.00	1.00
Locus of Control	0.75	0.04	0.44
Key Figures	1.00	1.00	1.00
Time Perspective	1.00	0.38	0.71
Planning	0.72	0.79	1.00
Self-Concept	0.82	1.00	1.00
TCU/PMES Scales			
Warmth	1.00	0.00	0.00
Control	0.45	0.23	0.03
Conflict	0.80	0.00	0.00
Peer Activity Level	0.13	1.00	0.50
Trouble	1.00	0.00	0.00
Familiarity with Parents	0.00	0.00	0.11
Conventional Involvement	1.00	0.00	0.00
Self-Esteem	0.73	0.00	0.00
Environment	0.17	0.00	0.00
School Satisfaction	0.00	0.00	0.00
Parent Involvement			
Parent Career Support	0.08	0.00	0.00
Parent Career Action	0.00	1.00	0.01

portant than did the No Program Group (M = 1.62, SD =.63); e) Self Concept F(1, 76) = 7.29, p < 0.01. The Career Trek Program (M = 2.16, SD =1.16) students had a clearer self-concept than did the No Program Group (M = 1.60, SD =.57).

TCU/PMES Scales on Family, Friends and Self: ANOVA results indicated that there were program group differences on the following subscales of the TCU/PMES (Table 5).

Family Relation Subscale: The two groups differed in the conflict items in the family relations subscale F(1, 76) = 5.32, p <0.02. The No Program Group (M = 1.11, SD =.87) had less conflict in their family than the Career Trek Group (M = 1.58, SD =.94). The two groups did not significantly differ in parental warmth or control.

Peer Activity Subscale: The two groups differed in the peer trouble items in the peer activity subscale F(1, 76) = 7.78, p < 0.01. The Career Trek Group (M = 0.62, SD =.72) had friends who were more often in trouble than did the No Program Group (M = 0.25, SD =.40). As well the two groups differed in the conventional involvement items F(1, 76) = 4.66, p < 0.03. The Career Trek Group (M = 2.32, SD =.58) had friends who engaged in less conventional activities than did the No Program Group (M = 2.60, SD =.57). The two groups did not significantly differ in the familiarity with parents items in

the peer activity subscale.

Self Subscale: The two groups differed in the school satisfaction items in the self subscale $F(1, 76) = 4.17$, $p < 0.05$. The Career Trek Group ($M = 2.99$, $SD = .80$) reported less school satisfaction than did the No Program Group ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .63$). The two groups did not significantly differ in the self-esteem or environment items in this subscale.

Parental Involvement

No significant differences between Career Trek participants and non-participants were found in the two parental involvement subscales (Table 4).

Discussion

Children's Career Development

Using data from children in grades 5 – 12, we provide a more reliable perspective of children's career exploration processes as they progress in school. Not surprisingly, the findings from this study confirm that children's career exploration processes change as they transition from elementary grade levels to senior years. What was interesting is the direction of these changes. Findings suggest that children in grades 5/6 demonstrate the highest levels of career interest, planning, and curiosity with

Table 4

Comparing the responses of Grade 5-6 Career Trek participants with a comparable No Career Development Program Group in the TCU/PMES Scales and Parent/Guardian Support Scale

Measures	Career Trek Group		No Program Group				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p<
Childhood Career Development Scale							
Information	1.91	0.87	2.16	0.94	1.73	1,88	0.19
Curiosity/Exploration	2.25	0.87	2.47	0.89	1.43	1,88	0.24
Interests	1.62	1.17	1.52	0.82	0.23	1,88	0.63
Locus of Control	1.85	1.06	1.94	0.87	0.20	1,87	0.66
Key Figures	2.27	1.00	2.08	0.85	0.90	1,86	0.35
Time Perspective	1.90	1.06	2.01	0.99	0.25	1,86	0.62
Planning	1.75	0.98	1.86	0.78	0.32	1,86	0.57
Self-Concept	1.82	1.03	1.84	0.77	0.01	1,86	0.92
TCU/PMES Scales							
Family							
Warmth	3.30	0.59	3.17	0.59	1.24	1,85	0.27
Control	2.98	0.54	2.91	0.60	0.30	1,85	0.58
Conflict	1.49	0.79	1.38	0.99	0.33	1,84	0.57
Friends							
Peer Activity Level	2.62	0.84	2.74	0.99	0.36	1,85	0.55
Trouble	0.40	0.52	0.21	0.41	3.57	1,84	0.06
Familiarity with Parents	3.14	0.63	3.13	0.73	0.00	1,84	0.95
Conventional Involvement	2.58	0.56	2.54	0.57	0.14	1,84	0.71
Self							
Self-Esteem	3.23	0.59	3.09	0.86	0.86	1,85	0.36
Environment	3.64	0.41	3.56	0.50	0.62	1,84	0.43
School Satisfaction	3.49	0.52	3.31	0.66	2.15	1,84	0.15
Parental Involvement							
Parent Career Support	4.18	0.56	3.81	0.71	6.91	1,88	0.01
Parent Career Action	3.01	0.64	2.54	0.74	10.15	1,88	0.00

Table 5.

Comparing the responses of Grade 7-8 Career Trek participants with a comparable No Career Development Program Group in the TCU/PMES Scales and Parent/Guardian Support Scale

Measures	Career Trek Group		No Program Group				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	df	p<
Childhood Career Development Scale							
Information	2.21	1.08	1.82	0.66	3.80	1,76	0.06
Curiosity/Exploration	2.62	0.84	2.25	0.55	5.06	1,76	0.03
Interests	1.94	1.28	1.37	0.43	7.12	1,76	0.01
Locus of Control	2.10	1.26	1.61	0.68	4.56	1,76	0.04
Key Figures	2.36	0.93	2.07	0.56	2.80	1,76	0.10
Time Perspective	2.10	1.20	1.81	0.79	1.67	1,76	0.20
Planfulness	2.14	1.26	1.62	0.63	5.30	1,76	0.02
Self-Concept	2.16	1.16	1.60	0.57	7.29	1,76	0.01
TCU/PMES Scales							
Family							
Warmth	2.84	0.78	3.10	0.81	2.15	1,76	0.15
Control	2.93	0.48	3.02	0.53	0.67	1,76	0.41
Conflict	1.58	0.94	1.11	0.87	5.32	1,75	0.02
Friends							
Peer Activity Level	2.61	0.84	2.41	0.78	1.10	1,76	0.30
Trouble	0.62	0.72	0.25	0.40	7.78	1,76	0.01
Familiarity with Parents	2.97	0.73	3.02	0.76	0.09	1,76	0.76
Conventional Involvement	2.32	0.58	2.60	0.57	4.66	1,76	0.03
Self							
Self-Esteem	2.85	0.78	3.02	0.76	0.87	1,76	0.35
Environment	3.26	0.69	3.41	0.75	0.89	1,76	0.35
School Satisfaction	2.99	0.80	3.32	0.63	4.17	1,76	0.05
Parent Involvement							
Parent Career Support	3.93	0.72	4.10	0.68	1.09	1.76	0.30
Parent Career Action	2.89	0.64	2.93	0.69	0.05	1,76	0.83

statistically significant decreases when compared to children in middle and senior years.

Career interest, planning and curiosity are all critical in career exploration. Super (1990) noted that curiosity is a basic need for children "exploring possible selves and future scenarios" (p. 47). Children manifest curiosity through exploration, experimentation, risk-taking, and inquiring (Savickas, 2005), and findings suggest that the earlier the grade, the greater the career-related curiosity. The "drop off" in these skills between Grade 6 and middle school years may limit exploration, resulting in unrealistic aspirations and expectations about the future (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005). Children will typically choose to explore careers that they associate with their interests. Tracey (2002) provided evidence that career interests change over time, becoming more stable from elementary to middle school. Our research shows that students' perceptions of their interests do not differ between elementary and high school levels. Students who have some degree of awareness of the need to approach career exploration in an organized manner, either by having a clearly-defined goal that they can describe a strategy for attaining, or who

have an awareness of multiple career options along with some kind of plan to work toward these, will be more effective in their career decision-making.

For many youth, high school graduation signifies a shift to another stage of life, one in which career decisions are more immediately relevant. Career-related curricula is generally introduced at the senior grade levels, at the time when adolescents are choosing high school course levels and electives that may or may not facilitate entry into post-secondary education (Dietsche, 2012). From this, it may be reasonably expected that students in the senior years are more likely to report higher levels of career exploration activities. However, findings from this study indicated that career exploration decreases from elementary to high school years. There are a number of possible explanations for this change. It may be that some adolescents have solidified their career and post-secondary plans so do not perceive career exploration to be a priority. A second explanation may be found in the substantial body of research that has documented that youth are increasingly direction less in their planning for careers (Staff, Harris, Sabates, & Briddell, 2010). Although the post-secondary participation rate in Canada is 37% of 18-24 year olds, approximately 35-50% of students drop out, partially due to not liking their program or feeling that it did not fit with their interests (Parkin, 2009). As well, findings suggested a significant decrease in adolescents' self-esteem from middle to high school. For some adolescents, decreased engagement in career exploration activities may be related to feeling overwhelmed and unable to articulate a defined sense of self (Usinger & Smith, 2010).

Impact of Career Intervention Program

This study tested the hypothesis that children who participated in the Career Trek program would demonstrate higher career-related self-efficacy and awareness than their peers who did not participate in the program. Our findings supported this hypothesis. Given that students participate in the core program of Career Trek in Grades 5-6, the results suggest that the benefit of participation emerges in Grades 7-8. Perhaps engaging in experiential career learning through hands-on skill building helped participants recognize opportunities to think about careers in a manner that they would previously not have perceived, giving them the necessary skills to actually conceptualize the tasks related to career planning. These findings are particularly promising if Super's model is viewed from an epigenetic perspective: when children's career exploration trajectories emerge from environmental factors including quality educational and extra-curricular activities and supportive family/and school relationships, that facilitate the successful navigation of the growth stage (birth to age 14), they achieve a more solid foundation from which they can transition to the exploration and later stages of career development.

Social Contextual Factors

Parental involvement is a powerful influence on children's career exploration processes. In our study parental involvement and action in career development was significantly higher at the middle grades (Grades 7/8) and supports the notion that guidance by adults with influence could lead to a stronger sense of control and self-efficacy in career development. Scores on parental career support and career action were significantly greater for the Career Trek participants when they were enrolled in the program (Grade 5-6) and yet did not differ in the following year. This suggests that Career Trek acted as a catalyst for parents to provide tangible and emotional support for their children's career exploration when they were in the program.

In contrast, children who did not participate in Career Trek reported a predictable pattern of decreased parental involvement as they transitioned from elementary to high school. This is entirely consistent with research that has found overall parental involvement diminishes during the middle school years to minimal involvement at the high school level (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang, Hill, & Hofkens, 2014). At the time when children could benefit from greater parental

involvement, parents become less actively engaged with their children. There are a number of possible explanations for this situation. Many parents believe that their children have gained sufficient knowledge regarding post-secondary choices and careers through school-based courses. Others feel that they do not want to "push" particular career directions onto children (Levine & Sutherland, 2013). Parents who may not have high school or post-secondary education may perceive that they are constrained in their efforts to adequately support and encourage their children to achieve their educational/career expectations. Parents may also perceive a period of "developmental indecision" as typical for this stage (Guay, Ratelle, Senecal, Larose, & Deschenes, 2006). Finally, parents may support the idea of "naïve psychology" for career exploration that is constructed from the popular discourse of matching interests and occupational roles position (Marshall, Young, Domene, & Zaidman-Zait, 2008, p. 199). This position reflects the idea that when parents observe their child is interested in particular subjects such as dinosaurs or the planetary system, this attraction will easily and readily translate into an aptitude for archaeology or astronomy. Although this is a reasonable and common belief, it is almost always erroneous as it is not grounded in a well-formulated conceptual framework that accounts for children's developmental stages.

Implications for Practice

Career intervention programs in general have been found to have positive impacts on participant career development. The results of this research suggest that timing of career exploration can also play an important role as elementary-aged children are clearly receptive to early intervention career exploration. From a practical standpoint, it is important to appreciate that when children are presented with new and interesting information in the form of career exploration, they are more likely to report engaging in career-related behaviours. "Doing" is generally rated as holding greater relevance and meaning for students compared to solely listening (Reynolds & Harel-Capterton, 2011). Having this knowledge encourages educators and other stakeholders, including non-profit youth organizations, to plan for the specific types of experiential learning activities that may facilitate greater understanding of particular careers.

Moreover, given that a decrease in parental involvement is associated with less career exploration activities in the middle and high school periods, key stakeholders are encouraged to develop more effective ways of linking parents and family members to information that can promote career-related discussions. Parents/family members report a lack of confidence in their abilities to engage in these activities with their children without support (Levine & Sutherland, 2013). Helping parents generate conversations that are focused on individual abilities, talents, and qualities may promote greater career awareness.

There are a number of other important findings. For some students, the universal, population-based approach to career exploration is sufficient. However, these programs may not meet the career exploration needs of youth who experience academic, social, emotional, or economic challenges. Low socio-economic status, single-parent family structure, parents who did not graduate from high school, absence of vocational guidance, racial/ethnic minority status, and child welfare involvement are all associated with poorer academic performance (Bauer & Riphahn, 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hussey, Kanjilal, & Nathan, 2016; Lefmann & Combs-Orme, 2014; Nguyen, 2011). Research has suggested that academically at-risk children and adolescents who participate in targeted career development programs demonstrate an increase in both self-esteem and post–secondary school aspirations (Jackson et al., 2011; McIlveen, Morgan, & Bimrose, 2012; Medvide & Blustein, 2010; Turner & Conkel, 2010).
The finding that Career Trek participants report higher levels of friends who were more often in trouble, who engaged in less conventional activities, and whose perceived higher levels of conflict with parents suggests that schools are in fact targeting the appropriate students for the pro-

gram. Moreover, the finding that Career Trek participants demonstrated higher levels of career exploration behaviours reinforces the position that early intervention programs can be effective in mitigating negative risk factors.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the absence of a contextual analysis that focused specifically on culture. Although the FFS and Career Behaviour checklist have been validated in different cultural contexts (Glozah & Pevalin, 2017), neither have been tested/adapted to address culturally sensitive dynamics that influence career exploration. Children's career exploration develops within specific culture and social contexts and clearly, similar considerations must occur with respect to how these supports and behaviours are assessed. Secondly, a potential limitation exists with respect to the research participants. Given that participants were limited to those who returned completed parental consent forms, the results may be biased toward youth from higher socioeconomic circumstances. Previous research has identified differences with inner-city youth demonstrating lower scores on beliefs related to career exploration, planning, and decision making (Turner, Ziebell, & Conkel, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that the youth who completed the research measures had access to parental and family contexts that prioritized career exploration, thus suggesting selection bias.

Areas for Future Research

The findings from this study suggest a number of areas for future research. For example, Oliveira, Taveira, and Porfeli (2015) have encouraged researchers to further explore children's interactions with key-figures, and development of career interests along with the influence of support offered by key-figures such as parents and teachers. The finding that parental involvement regarding career exploration drops off in the high school years suggests that this is an important area for further exploration. This suggests that a key for further exploration includes investigating how to facilitate and sustain parental involvement in career exploration throughout early, middle, and senior years.

Current thinking affirms that the key factors that facilitate youth post- secondary participation are cultural, where there is: a) an understanding of the benefits of post-secondary education, b) it is perceived as a meaningful option, and c) there has been early and sufficient preparation to facilitate success (Finnie & Pavlic, 2013). In view of this, the research team is currently conducting a longitudinal study that is assessing the long-term impact of the Career Trek program on former participant's high school graduation and post-secondary participation rates. Using propensity score matching, the research team will compare Career Trek participants to a matched control group on educational outcomes, post-secondary participation rates, child welfare and criminal justice involvement, mental health issues, and income assistance to assess the effect of early intervention career exploration as a protective factor for at-risk youth.

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Group Career Counselling for International Students: Evaluation and Promising Practices

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Abstract

Similar to trends in universities across North America, Western University has seen a 134% increase in international student enrolment from 2009-2017. Enrolment increases have corresponded with increased demand for career services to meet the unique needs of international students. Group career counselling for international students wishing to secure employment in Canada was piloted as a scalable program to meet increasing demands. Participants demonstrated significant improvements in their career development process, including improved cultural adjustment, self-understanding, job search strategies, and interview anxiety. Through this study, we present a promising, evidence-based, scalable model to meet growing career development demands among international students.

Keywords
Career Counselling Practice, Process & Outcomes; Career Assessment; Group Counselling; Undergraduates & Early Adults

Growing Demands

Comparing the demographic makeup of Canadian universities twenty years ago and now, there is a noticeable increase of registered international students. More than 160,000 international students are enrolled annually in educational programs in Canada, with approximately 90,000 international students enrolled in universities (McMullen & Elias, 2011). According to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, 2012), international students represent approximately 9% of full-time registered students in undergraduate programs and slightly over 20% of students enrolled in graduate programs, with students attracted from more than 200 countries (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, 2009)

At Western University, there are growing numbers in the undergraduate and graduate international student population, from 1,466 (5.9% of full time student enrolment) international students in the 2009-2010 academic year to 3,445 (11.9% of full time student enrolment) in the 2016-2017 academic year, representing a 134% increase in international student enrolment. With the university's growth in the international student population, the demands on services for international students have also continued to grow.

Increased Demand for Service Among International Students

International students continue to access career counselling services and programs in large numbers. Western University recorded an increase of career counselling services accessed by international students such that 24% of all counselling hours were attended by international students in the 2015-2016 academic year, up from 9% in 2008-2009.

Unique Career Needs

Concomitant with the need to address international students increased demand for services and programming is the necessity to address the distinct nature of some of their career needs. The distinct career needs of international students have been identified in the literature, and have predominately focused on problems of adjustment,

including language proficiency, academic demands, loneliness, establishing a new support network, culture shock, gender role expectations, and values conflicts (Arthur, 2008; Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991, 1995; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Pope, 2007). Research on the experiences of international students has typically emphasized the initial phase of cross-cultural adjustment, with less attention on international students' career development and transition to employment following completion of their studies (Arthur, 2007, 2008; Berry, 2001, 2008; Chen, 1999; Odberg, 1960; Pedersen, 1995).

Acculturative Stress and Barriers to Employment

During university life, international students, like any other student, deal with the typical stressors associated with financial demands, academic pressures, loneliness, and career indecision (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). International and immigrant students also face unique issues related to their career development as well as challenges associated with adapting to a foreign country. Such challenges include culture shock, confusion about role expectations, homesickness, loss of social support, discrimination, and language barriers (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). These experiences, collectively referred to as "acculturative stress", relate to specific types of difficulties associated with individuals' cross-cultural encounters, which can manifest in a range of adjustment and personal concerns (Bowman & Evans, 2006).

Language Barriers

Language proficiency has been shown to be linked to experiences of discrimination among new immigrants in Canada, with stronger accents from native languages being linked to increased experiences of discrimination and prejudice (Bowman & Evans, 2006). Language capacity, including both second language ability and confidence about speaking in the second language, has been implicated as a barrier to career decision making, career exploration, and navigation of selection processes (e.g., communicating in an interview setting) for international students (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Because of this, some students may pursue occupations that do not require high levels of English proficiency (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Diemer and Ali (2009) assert that being raised in one environment and then being transplanted to another with a different language, customs, and occupational structure can profoundly impact the types of jobs one pursues and often results in immigrants securing employment in lower status, lower paying jobs. This change in occupational options and social status may result in lowered self-esteem, shame, depression, anxiety, and internalized classicism (Diemer & Ali, 2009). Numerous considerations contribute to the degree of a person's acculturation, such as: Cultural heritage, ethnicity, ethnic pride and identity, inter-ethnic interactions, and inter-ethnic distance (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2009), with English language fluency being one of the strongest predictors (Ma & Yeh, 2010). These common needs and considerations among international students' make group counselling a potentially impactful tool as it supports normalization of feelings and experiences, as well as opportunities to learn from shared experiences among members of the group.

Securing Employment in Canada

Recent research has indicated that international students' primary career-related concerns are job search and placement (Shen & Herr, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). More comprehensive approaches to support the job search, placement, and career decision-making needs of international students are needed, especially when considering decisions to pursue employment and immigration to Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). One pathway to employment and longer term immigration available to international students studying in Canada involves the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP), which allows international students to work in Canada after graduation. The PGWPP allows students who have graduated from a partici-

pating Canadian postsecondary institution to gain valuable Canadian experience. Skilled Canadian work experience gained through PGWPP helps graduates qualify for permanent residence in Canada through express entry (CIC, 2016). Approximately 30% of international student graduates change their immigration status by securing post-graduate work permits, indicating a significant interest among international students to secure work and live in Canada post-graduation (OECD, 2011).

Many countries, for example, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and France, have shifted their immigration policies to attract international students to stay as permanent residents because they are seen as valuable sources of skilled labour. Available research suggests that the decision-making process to stay in the destination country is complex, involving perceived career and lifestyle opportunities in both home and host cultures (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Identified barriers in the limited research on international students' job search processes include language proficiency, networking and interview expectations, and whether or not employers value their international experience (Arthur & Flynn, 2012; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). These complex career development needs, coupled with student interests to secure employment post-graduation indicates the importance of offering high-quality, tailored career development supports for international students.

Preferred Support

At present, there is a gap in research exploring the experiences of international students in the final stage of their educational programs who wish to secure employment in the country in which they are studying (Arthur, 2003b, 2008; Leung, 2007). International students have expressed needs for specific support while at university, including: Employment experience while in school, services specific to international student's needs, services specific to needs at graduation, information on immigration processes, help with job search processes, better understanding of cultural nuances, concrete help to access local labour market, identifying employers who are accepting of international students, and help to secure international student mentors (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). With this in mind, the career counselling team at Western University developed the Group Career Counselling for International Students program, and has offered two of such groups per academic year since 2011.

Group Career Counselling

Group counselling is "an interpersonal process that stresses conscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviours…[with a focus on growth and]…discovering internal resources of strength." (Corey, 2004, p. 5). Group career counselling is characterized by three core elements: "1) career planning and decision-making require input about occupations; 2) accurate data about self (abilities, interests, and values) are needed; and 3) the process offers opportunities to explore personal meaning, identify and examine subjective aspects of the self, get feedback from others, and try on roles." (Pyle, 1986, p. 3).

Why Offer Group Career Counselling?

Group counselling is a form of psycho-educational counselling that can be used among groups of individuals with common interest, goals, or experiences, who are seeking similar outcomes through the pursuit of counselling. The rationale for offering group career counselling as an alternative to individual counselling is based on the unique needs of international students and how this population benefits from a group format over an individual counselling format. Dipeolu, Kang, and Cooper (2007) suggest that the benefits of a group format for counselling include: (1) normalization of feelings and decreased isolation, (2) increased social support, (3) opportunities to increase English language skills, and (4) promotion of information sharing for problem-solving and accessing resources. Carr, Koyama, and Thiagarajan (2003) examined the advantages of a support group to Asian women and noted that the benefits of a group format contributed to feelings of hope, validation of feelings, socialization with peers, practicing English without judgement,

and addressing stress related to academic, personal, and acculturation concerns. While these benefits were identified within the scope of mental health-related counselling, group counselling also provides a promising model through which to provide career counselling services, particularly among international students pursuing a common goal of acquiring employment post-graduation. Group counselling also offers a scalable model to meet increased demands for career services among international students without proportionate increases in resourcing or staffing.

The Group Counselling for International Students Program

Program structure. Since the program was initiated in 2010, the content, design, duration, and assessment strategy of the program has evolved substantively. During the 2010-2011 academic year, two pilot group counselling cohorts were offered for 16 participants. Each cohort included five group counselling sessions at a duration of 90 minutes each. A pilot evaluation included measurement of student satisfactions coupled with daily reflections and testimonials. Over the first three years of offering the program, the structure and activities were refined, session duration was increased, and demand continued to grow, leading to an interest in formally evaluating the program through this research study. From 2013-2015, the time frame for this research, four group counselling cohorts were facilitated (one per academic term). Each group included eight 3-hour sessions, covering topics that included adjustment and culture shock, self-identify, skills identification, job search strategies and self-promotion, developing an application package, and maintaining employment in Canada (see Table 1 for more information on session topics, learning outcomes and sample activities). Students participated in cohorts to support community building and validation of emotions and experiences throughout the sessions.

Measuring program outcomes. As a relatively new model of career service provision for international students, measurement of program outcomes and effectiveness was a key consideration in the development of this program. Three validated scales which aligned with the program outcomes were selected. The Career Optimism scale is a subscale of the Career Futures Inventory, and measures students' disposition toward their career plans, possibilities and prospects (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005). Career optimism has been shown to be linked to positive career development outcomes, including persevering through difficult job search processes, effective establishment of career plans, and adaptability to novel situations (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005). The Performance Anxiety subscale of the Measure of Anxiety in Selection Interviews (MASI) scale was used to measure students' confidence in their ability to perform well in an interview setting, and important outcome of the group counselling program (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004). The Diversity Attitudes subscale of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire is a measure of an individual's self-understanding in relation to the diverse world, and ability to effectively build relationships with diverse others (Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, & McFarland, 2002). This measure is relevant to students' ability to establish effective relationships within the group counselling environment, as well as confidence in relating to future employers and colleagues in the workplace. Engaging in meaningful conversation and reflection in a diverse group counselling model is expected to contribute to participants' appreciation of diversity.

In addition to the scales identified above, a number of outcomes-based measurement items were developed collaboratively by the project researchers (KM & FE) and career counsellors (SL & AL), to measure whether the program was accomplishing its other intended outcomes. These items were categorized into seven key areas: Cultural adaptation, self-understanding, skills identification, job search strategies, application package preparation, self-promotion, and maintaining employment.

Purpose of this Study

There is a gap in the literature regarding the effectiveness

Table 1
Session topics, outcomes and sample activities

Session Outcomes	Activities
Session #1: Adjustment and Culture Shock - Understand how the psycho-educational group functions - Recognize and cope with culture shock - Awareness of resources available at the University and in the community	- Introduction of counsellor(s) and participants - Establish the group goals and expectations - Icebreaker and discussion questions related to culture shock and personal experiences
Session #2: "Who Am I?" Assessment - Understanding and self-awareness of personality, vales, skills, interests - Understanding and knowledge of how personal factors affect career decision making	- Group completion of "Who am I" career assessment, developed by Career Services at York University
Session #3: Skills Identification - Identify core competencies and transferrable skills - Knowledge of skills employers value - How to identify the desired skills in job ads	- Small group discussion of skills developed in country of origin and Canada - List the skills that an employer is seeking from a variety of job ads, carousel style - Discussion of personal transferrable skills
Session #4: Job Search Strategies - Understand the effective job search process - How to access the hidden job market - How to network with employers	- Develop and practice an "elevator pitch" - Practice requesting informational interviews
Session #5: Application Package - Understanding of the key components and how to create an effective resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, and portfolio - How to secure references - Self-awareness of skills, accomplishments, experiences, and education, and connect with the job opportunity	- Peer feedback on resumes and cover letters, roundtable style
Session #6: Self-Promotion - Understand common types of interview questions and strategies to answer questions - Understand factors that influence effectiveness of interview performance - Identify and apply strategies to reduce interview anxiety	- Practice responding to interview questions with peer feedback, in dyads
Session #7: Negotiation and Maintaining Employment in Canada - How to negotiate a job offer - Understand the expectations of employers and the rights of workers in Canada - How to manage common workplace concerns	- Group discussion of anticipated difficulties in the workplace, and strategies to manage conflict or challenging transitions - Apply strategies to case studies
Session #8: Future Steps and Group Closure - Address the feelings of ending a group - Develop career future plans - Celebrate the relationships among members	- Ideal work day activity - Share positive comments about the strengths observed in other group members, as yarn toss activity

of a group counselling approach designed to address the unique needs of international students within a career context. A literature search using terms "group counselling", "career", and "international students" both individually and in combination did not return any published examples on the topic of group career counselling with international students. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirically-based research study to investigate the advantages

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and effectiveness of group career counselling for international students.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated in this study were grounded in the intended outcomes of group career counselling for international students. These questions include:

1) What is the impact of group career counselling for international students?

2) What topics or components of group counselling do students qualitatively report as having the greatest impact on them?

Hypotheses:

Students will demonstrate improvements from the beginning of the program to the end in the following career competencies: cultural adjustment, self-understanding, skills identification, job search strategies, application package development, self-promotion, strategies for maintaining employment; career optimism, interview anxiety, and attitudes toward diversity.

Method

Participants

The research was conducted with four cohorts of international undergraduate and graduate students from fall 2013 to winter 2015. Of the 61 students taking part in the Group Career Counselling for International Students program, a total of 32 participated in the research (65%). Across all cohorts, 27 males and 34 females participated in group counselling, of whom 31 students were enrolled in undergraduate studies and 30 were enrolled in graduate studies. The country of origin of the majority of participants was China. Other countries of origin, in order of frequency of participation, included India, Rwanda, Barbados, Armenia, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Ukraine, and Vietnam.

Measures

A mixed methods approach was used to assess effectiveness of the program. The quantitative and qualitative instruments used to assess client outcomes are described below.

Quantitative measures. Quantitative measures were used to assess student knowledge and competencies in 10 core areas of interest. These 10 areas were identified based on the intended program outcomes. Thirty-three items were developed by the first author to assess change in knowledge and competencies in the following 7 areas: Cultural adjustment (5 items; $\alpha = .68$), self-understanding (7 items; $\alpha = .75$), skills identification (5 items; $\alpha = .76$), job search strategies (6 items; $\alpha = .87$), application package development (4 items; $\alpha = .72$), self-promotion (3 items; $\alpha = .81$), and maintaining employment (3 items; $\alpha = .68$). All of the items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strong agree (5).

Validated measures were used to assess pre-post changes in three of the 10 areas: Career optimism (Rottinghaus et al., 2005), interview anxiety (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004), and attitude toward diversity (Moely et al., 2002). Participants rated their agreement with the items for all three measures on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). Each measure is addressed in turn below.

Career optimism. Participants completed the 11–item Career Optimism subscale of the Career Futures Inventory (Rottinhaus et al., 2005) to assess their positive expectations in regards to their career development. Example items include "I get excited when I think about my career" and "I will definitely make the right decision in my career" (Rottinghaus et al., 2005). Rottinghaus and colleagues (2005) provide considerable support for the reliability and validity of the scale.

Interview anxiety. Participants' completed the Performance Anxiety subscale of the Measure of Anxiety in Selection Interviews (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004) to assess their concern about their performance in a job interview. The subscale consists of six items (e.g., "In interviews, I get very nervous about whether my performance is good enough", "During an interview, I

worry about what will happen if I don't get the position"). McCarthy and Goffin (2004) provide considerable support for the reliability and validity of the scale.

Attitude toward diversity. Participants' completed the Diversity Attitudes subscale of the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (Moely et al., 2002) to assess their perspectives on cultural diversity. Example items include "I enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds very different from my own" and "Cultural diversity within a group makes the group more interesting and effective" (Moely et al., 2002). Moely and colleagues (2002) outline the reliability and validity of the scale.

Qualitative measures. Participants completed two forms of qualitative assessment as part of the program: Daily reflections and end of program testimonials. Each is addressed below.

Daily reflections. Students were asked to complete a reflection at the end of each daily session. They responded to the following four items on a piece of paper: (a) Three words to describe your day; (b) What did you learn today? (c) What did you like today? Dislike? and (d) Any suggestions for next time? Responses were collected and reviewed by the program facilitator and themes for each day were identified and shared back with the group at the following session. Students were invited to share comments and reflections on these themes, which provided the counsellors with the opportunity to validate the findings with the students and clarify any comments. In some instances, students added additional context to themes that were identified. Counsellors reviewed this data and identified emergent themes across participants' daily reflection in alignment with the 10 core areas measured through quantitative elements of the study.

Testimonials. Career counsellors facilitating the program prompted students to reflect verbally on their experiences as participants in the group career counselling program during the final session of each group offered. Students shared their reflections, herein referred to as testimonials, verbally with the group. Testimonials were recorded in writing by research assistants. Written testimonials were also collected at the end of the final session.

Procedure

All students in the program participated in the standard evaluation components of the program (i.e., the pre- and post-program survey, daily reflections, and testimonials). The pre-program surveys were administered on the first day of the program after program participants were welcomed to the program. The post-program survey was administered on the last day of the program after the program had wrapped up. Daily reflections were collected at the end of each daily session. Testimonials were prompted and recorded in writing during the final session of group counselling.

Before the end of the final session for each group, students were invited by a staff member who was not involved with the facilitation of the program to participate in the formal research study, allowing their assessment data to be used for research purposes in addition to quality improvement of the program. The institutional Research Ethics Board approved this study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis. Analyses were conducted in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) versions 23 and 24. Individual items within each of the core areas were computed into 10 scale variables representing the core areas of interest: cultural adjustment, self-understanding, skills identification, job search strategies, application package development, self-promotion, and maintaining employment, career optimism, interview anxiety, and attitudes toward diversity. A series of paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-test means for each of the 10 scale variables.

Qualitative analysis. This research study involved collection of qualitative data through two sources: daily reflections, and end of program verbal testimonials. Transcriptions of participant data contributions were analyzed through a system-

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Significantly Different Pre- and Post-Test Survey Items/Scales

Items/Scale[1]	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Cultural adjustment[2]	3.46 (.707)	4.09 (.650)
Self-understanding[2]	3.56 (.617)	4.15 (.739)
Skills identification	3.10 (.656)	3.96 (.786)
Job search strategies	2.60 (.828)	3.99 (.543)
Application package development	2.60 (.889)	3.74 (.583)
Self-promotion	2.53 (.911)	3.95 (.676)
Maintaining employment	2.33 (.710)	3.88 (.618)
Interview anxiety[3]	3.39 (.814)	2.76 (.803)

Note. [1] Unless otherwise indicated, $p < .001$; [2] $p < 0.005$; [3] Performance Anxiety subscale of the Measure of Anxiety in Selection Interviews (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004).

atic review of all qualitative data collectively, as types of information in the daily reflections and testimonials overlapped in both content and thematic contribution. Researchers reviewed testimonials to identify themes in two categories: (1) participant feedback about the structure and effectiveness of the group counselling program to assist with quality improvement (e.g. responses to the question 'What did you like today? Dislike?' and 'Any suggestions for next time?'), and (2) participant contribution that indicated learning outcomes accomplished through the group counselling session or program as a whole (e.g. responses to the question 'what did you learn today?'). Identifying themes within these two categories enabled the research team to better understand elements of the group counselling approach that were effective or that needed improvement, while also bolstering our understanding of change in participants' knowledge and competencies based on learning outcome driven questions. This enriched our understanding and ability to effectively interpret findings from the quantitative data.

Results

Quantitative Results

Significant differences were identified in eight of the 10 core areas assessed in this study. Specifically, as predicted, participants were significantly higher in cultural adjustment $t(31) = 3.80$, $p < 0.005$, self-understanding $t(31) = 3.22$, $p < 0.005$, skills identification, $t(31) = 4.07$, $p < 0.001$, job search strategies, $t(31) = 7.63$, $p < 0.001$, application package development, $t(30) = 8.07$, $p < 0.001$, self-promotion, $t(31) = 7.16$, $p < 0.001$, and strategies for maintaining employment, $t(31) = 8.33$, $p < 0.001$, at the end of the program compared to at the beginning. Participants also reported significantly lower levels of interview anxiety, $t(31) = -3.80$, $p < 0.001$ at the end of the program (see Table 2 for pre- and post-means and standard deviations of each scale). Students did not demonstrate the predicted increases in career optimism and attitude toward diversity over the course of the program.

Qualitative Results

Themes Indicating Student Learning and Development Outcomes. Students provided daily reflections and end of program testimonials. A thematic analysis of these comments identified nine themes relating to students' learning and development outcomes associated with the program. These themes aligned with eight core of the core areas of measurement that were assessed quantitatively (see Table 3).

Table 3

Nine themes identified in thematic analysis of qualitative data, coupled with student quotes.

Core Area	Student Quotes
Cultural Adjustment	'Before I took part in the group, I knew there was a difference in Chinese and Canadian job searching, but I didn't know what it was, so now I do.'
Self-Understanding	'…now I know who I am, and what career I'm looking for.'
Skills Identification	'What I learned from this group, I know how to improve my resume and know how to express myself in 30 seconds and now I even know the difference between good and bad skills'
Job Search Strategies	'I guess the most important [learning] was the job search and working strategies, those skills I use for networking and applying to the job market.'
Application Package Development	'The most important thing I learned was resumes, after recommendation of CAR strategies I came up with a better resume and cover letter. The job search process, it's helpful, so many tips on how to get the resume and cover letter done.'
Self-Promotion	'The most helpful things I learned for this session is giving a first impression to employers. I think that the thirty second elevator pitch contains the most helpful information, and helps you advertise yourself.'
Career Optimism	'I went into the session knowing nothing and I think it was scary and big and my questions were answered. Now I am confident about the topic and I can find a job.'
Interview Anxiety	'The interview mock practice boosted my confidence'
Attitudes Toward Diversity	'I learned that everyone is good at something and everyone is different and we can always learn from each other.'
General	'For me, I learned a lot, and then I remember our group at the beginning, and we didn't know each other, and now we're friends, and I really appreciate this opportunity to meet each other.'

Themes Indicating Program Effectiveness and Areas for Improvement. Additionally, four major themes were identified among recorded responses providing direct feedback on program effectiveness and opportunities for improvement:

(1) Students affirmed the benefits of the group career counselling approach as an effective model for career service delivery for international students. Students appreciated the learning that emerged from the group structure; hearing stories and experiences of others validated students' own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in relation to securing employment in Canada.

(2) Students expressed their learning through daily reflections in a manner that helped counsellors identify that outcomes intended for the session had been met.

(3) Students specifically highlighted enjoying interactive activities that gave them time and space to put concepts into practice, while building their skills and confidence. Students repeatedly and consistently expressed benefiting most from case studies and practice and group discussion in their daily reflection. Practical, hands-on, and skill-building approaches were important to the success of the group counselling.

(4) Students provided valuable information for improving the program in the future; they expressed a desire for more opportunities for one–on-one time with the counsellor, to share as a whole group, and more materials for advanced preparation/study (see Table 4 for example comments).

Discussion

Group Counselling Model and Implications for Career Counselling Practice

This study demonstrates that a group career counselling model presents an effective, efficient, and scalable approach to career service delivery for international students. As previously noted, the international student population within Canadian universities is growing, and Western University is no exception (AUCC, 2012; McMullen &

Table 4

Themes and Sample Student Quotes from Daily Reflections

Core Area	Student Quotes
(1) Affirmation of group counselling model	'enjoyed practice part and learning from partner' 'I like reading and watching each other's resumes, and giving feedback so that we could make improvements' 'Everyone is open about their thoughts and experiences. I learned a lot from others.'
(2) Students' demonstration of learning	'I learned how to answer several kinds of [interview] questions, started to think of behavioural questions, and learned what to wear for an interview' '[learned] negotiation at work place, how to take a job offer, employee's rights in Canada' '[learned] the differences between introverts and extroverts and my personality. This really resolves some of my puzzles and I have a clearer picture of myself.' 'I learned the aspects I should consider when career planning and how to contribute my experiences to my career' 'Culture shock and how to cope with difficulties while in Canada' 'The resources that I can use (on or off campus), some important points about finding a job.'
(3) Benefits of hands-on learning approaches and skill development	'Case studies based on real life applications. This helped me solve my personal questions' 'I liked practise for behaviour based questions' 'I liked the small group presentations and the sample question handouts' '[Liked] teamwork activities'
(4) Opportunities for program improvement (students' responses to 'any suggestions for next time?')	'Another interview practice, how to search jobs specific for recent graduates' 'Increase practice/discussion' 'Get more practical job info, suggestions, materials on job hunting' 'Examples of how to reject or accept job offers' '…more interactive activities' 'More tips about Canadian workplace culture.' 'More tips about resume building, specifically how to convert CV to resume and how to extract skills and challenges from past experiences'

Elias, 2011). Offering a dedicated group career counselling program to address the unique needs of international students accomplishes a number of important outcomes. International students perceive that the institution values their needs and offers specific supports dedicated to assisting them in accomplishing their career goals. This has potential to support ongoing recruitment of international students, and fostering a supportive environment where international students feel valued.

The group career counselling model for international students effectively met several unique career development outcomes related to barriers that international students commonly face when entering the Canadian job market. Specifically, the group model was effective at increasing international students' cultural adjustment, self-understanding, skills identification, job search strategies, application package development, self-promotion, and skills and knowledge relevant to their ability to maintain employment. Participants also demonstrated significantly reduced interview anxiety from the beginning to the end of the group counselling program. These changes were demonstrated both through significant pre-post quantitative findings in addition to participants' reflections of their learning through testimonials and daily reflections. Participants reported enhanced knowledge and skills related to networking, understanding interview expectations, and recognition of the value of international experience, which could be expected to enhance their ability to overcome job search barriers identified by Arthur and Flynn (2012) and Sangganjanavanich and colleagues (2011). Beyond navigating job search processes, participants also increased knowledge and skills relevant to maintaining employment, identified by Zunker (2006), through understanding cultural differences in

workplace norms and values such as non-verbal communication, managing conflict, and understanding differences in power and status between an immediate boss and subordinate (eg. negotiating a contract with a supervisor). This study demonstrates an effective, evidence-based model that meets unique career needs of international students that have been identified in the literature.

In addition to career development-specific client outcomes, participants identified additional benefits to the group counselling model relative to individual counselling, such as affirmation of their emotions and experiences, and opportunities to learn from peers' experiences. Furthermore, the group model presents opportunities to engage in interactive, hands on practice of skills, and solicit feedback from counsellors and peers, which students reported to be both enjoyable and a valuable learning experience.

The group career counselling program presents an efficient and scalable model that has potential for growth in the postsecondary education sector with minimal incremental increases in human and financial resources. The efficiency of this approach is clearly demonstrated by comparing counsellor hours involved in facilitating a full group counselling cohort, relative to providing individual career counselling to each of the cohort participants. Provision of individual career counselling to a full group cohort would require a minimum of 360 counsellor hours, not including preparation and debriefing time (24 in-session hours multiplied by 15 participants); comparatively, counsellor hours for the group model involves approximately 40 counsellor hours (24 hours in-session, and 16 hours [2 hours per session] of preparation and debriefing time). Once session content has been developed and delivered once by a counsellor, the efficiency of the model increases over subsequent group counselling cohorts facilitated. There is an ongoing demonstration of need and interest for this program, with approximately four times as many international students expressing interest in group career counselling than the number of spaces available, demonstrating ongoing opportunities for expansion. This model presents a promising model to meet expanding demands of career services at postsecondary institutions as resources become increasingly scarce.

Given that international students are not the only population with specific career development needs, this program offers a foundation for structuring future groups targeted toward other unique populations. For example, there may be groups of students within specific Faculties, such as Science or Business, or based on academic career, such as undergraduate or graduate, who could benefit from a group format with like-minded peers exploring specific content tailored to their needs. Other potential unique populations that would benefit from a group format could include students with disabilities, Indigenous students, mature students, and students who identify as LGBTQ2+ who are exploring transitions from university into employment. As noted, there are several benefits to increasing feelings of normalization and extension of participants' social and professional networks.

Limitations

As an applied research study primarily intended to evaluate outcomes of this group counselling program, there are a number of limitations with regard to scope and scale of this research. First, we did not establish a control group of international students who did not participate in the group counselling program to assess whether changes measured could be related to general student learning and development outside of the program. Second, participants in the study self-selected to participate in the group counselling program and the research study, potentially leading to a sample of students who are more motivated to engage in career development than the general international student population. Furthermore, all participant measures were self-report, based on an individual participants' reflection of their learning and growth; we were not able to include behavioural measures (eg. direct assessment of application package quality) or measure long term career outcomes within the scope of this project. Last, reliability and validity assessments have not been established for the

internally developed outcome measures included in this study. These limitations considered, we feel that participants' quantitative and qualitative reports of growth, coupled with counsellor assessments of client progress over the course of this group counselling program provides strong early evidence that group career counselling is an effective and scalable model for career service provision for international students.

Future Directions

This study fills a current gap in research on effectively meeting career development needs of international students who pursue university abroad and wish to maintain employment in their country of study. Additionally, we have established an evidence-based and highly scalable approach to meeting ongoing career needs. Recognizing the potential of the group counselling model for other niche groups, and in other psychoeducational settings, our team intends to work toward developing a toolkit and facilitation guide to support colleagues in the sector in offering group counselling at their respective institutions. Our team is also exploring opportunities to measure the long term career outcomes of international students who participated in the group program relative to a control group of their peers who did not engage in group counselling. This will involve reaching out to students both one and two years post-graduation to identify their employment status, and level of satisfaction with their employment status. Additional work is required with larger groups of research participants to establish reliability and validity measures of the outcome-based career development measures developed in house for this study. The current study establishes initial evidence that group counselling models offer effective, efficient, and scalable approaches to meeting the unique needs and increasing service demands of international students, and other potential target populations.

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Career and Guidance Counsellors Working in French Language Secondary Schools in Ontario: An Inventory of Current Tasks and Perceived Competence

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Abstract

In a North-American context, the practice of career and guidance counselling is plagued with many issues depending on jurisdiction. Usually those issues are related to the fact that career and guidance counsellors are obliged to engage in practices that are not always related to their profession. Considering the fact that career and guidance counsellors in Ontario are mainly teachers with little formal education and no clinical training, the current study's objective was to identify, describe, and conceptualize the tasks accomplished by N = 73 career and guidance counsellors working in French-language secondary schools in Ontario. Results suggest that career and guidance counsellors in Ontario spend a great deal of time on tasks unrelated to career and guidance counselling. Furthermore, a correlation between the amount of time allocated to, and the perceived level of competence in, completing some of the daily tasks accomplished by participants was identified. Finally, results suggest that career and guidance counsellors in Ontario often perceive themselves as being incompetent when it comes to some of the essential tasks associated with career and guidance counselling.

Key words: Career and guidance counsellors, Perception of incompetence, Training of career and guidance counsellors.

Résumé

Dans un contexte nord-américain, la pratique du conseiller d'orientation est confrontée à de nombreux problèmes selon la juridiction. Habituellement, ces problèmes sont liés au fait que les conseillers d'orientation sont obligés de s'engager dans des pratiques qui ne sont pas toujours liées à leur profession. Considérant que les conseillers d'orientation en Ontario sont principalement des enseignants sans aucune formation clinique, l'objectif de la présente recherche était d'identifier, de décrire et de conceptualiser les tâches accomplies par N = 73 conseillers d'orientation scolaire travaillant dans les écoles secondaires de langue française de l'Ontario. Les résultats suggèrent que les répondants consacrent une part importante de leur temps de travail à l'accomplissement de tâches étrangères à celles qui sont généralement associées à l'orientation professionnelle en milieu scolaire. De plus, une corrélation entre le temps alloué et le niveau de compétence perçu pour accomplir certaines des tâches quotidiennes accomplies par les participants a été établie. Finalement, les résultats suggèrent que les conseillers d'orientation en Ontario se perçoivent généralement comme incompétents en ce qui concerne l'accomplissement certaines des tâches essentielles associées au counselling d'orientation.

Mots clés: Conseillers d'orientation, Sentiment d'incompétence, Éducation des conseillers d'orientation

Within North America, the practice of career and guidance counselling has been the subject of many studies mainly

emerging from the United States. Whereas in Canada, research on this topic has been mainly undertaken in two jurisdictions: Québec and Ontario. In general, Canadian and American research demonstrates that many issues currently plague the profession of guidance and school counselling (Dietsche, 2013; Viviers, 2016; Nadon, Samson, Gazzola and Thériault, 2016).

For example, in the United States, school counsellors report struggling to identify the specificity of their role. Studies conducted by American researchers identified four potential factors associated with the difficulties guidance counsellors experience in school settings. Specifically, (A) their training may not reflect the needs of the students or the schools (Brott & Myers, 1999); (B) they experience difficulties identifying and defining their roles and work practices (Bardhoshi & Duncun, 2009); (C) other individuals (i.e., school principals) sometimes define the practices undertaken by counsellors, leading to a lack of understanding concerning their role; and (D) counsellors are often asked to fulfill an administrative role, rather than performing the responsibilities or practices typically associated with guidance and career counsellors. In essence, this confusion may be summarized by Foster (2010), who concluded that "the focus of school counsellors is largely dependent on the systems in which they find themselves" (p. 32).

Research has identified numerous potential consequences that may be attributed to career and guidance counsellors' confusion associated with these roles and practices. Firstly, the nature and quality of services provided to students has been found to vary from one school to the next (Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Milde, Leitner & Skelton, 2006). Secondly, the availability of career and guidance counsellors to students is dependent on the number of administrative tasks they have completed (Sears & Granello, 2002). Lastly, the confusion around the tasks accomplished by career and guidance counsellors can also contaminate the students' perception of the counsellors' role, which may thereby make students reluctant to use their services (Baker, 2000).

In the same vein, research that has been undertaken in Québec reflects similar concerns to those that have been identified by American researchers examining the experiences of career and guidance counsellors in the United States. Specifically, even though career and guidance counsellors in Québec are board licensed, which requires at minimum a master's degree, they nonetheless experience issues concerning their practices. From a psychodynamic work perspective, Viviers (2016) identified that those issues could be a source of suffering. This suffering results from a constant tension between what the counsellor was educated to do, what he or she has been asked to do by the school administrator, and what he or she is actually able to do considering the demands and the paucity of resources available. Forced to react concretely to these situations of suffering, counsellors use defensive strategies that help them maintain employment as a school and guidance counsellor.

The reality in Ontario differs from that described in Québec and the United States. Contrary to what is required for career and guidance counsellors practicing in the latter jurisdictions, those practicing in Ontario do not need to hold a Masters degree or to complete supervised internships. Indeed, a report published in 2002, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) showed that, with the exception of Québec, the training of career and guidance counsellors in Canada was insufficient. Furthermore, the report described career and guidance counselling in Canada as weakly professionalized and also demonstrated that Canadian career and guidance counsellors were typically trained in areas other than career and guidance counselling.

In a second report published in 2004, the OECD underlined that the training competencies required to fulfill the role of career or guidance counsellors in Anglophone provinces, including Ontario, were imprecise and variable. Similarly, Keats and Laitsch (2010) add that Canadian guidance counsellors are usually teachers with very limited training in career and guidance counselling. For example, in Ontario high schools, career and guidance

counselling is primarily provided by teachers who have inherited the title of career and guidance counsellor. In essence, most of the Ontarian teachers who take on the role of career and guidance counsellor usually acquire their training through three undergraduate additional qualification (AQ) courses in career and guidance counselling offered online by various universities or through the Ontario School Counsellor Association. Each AQ course carries a workload of 115 hours. The training of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario does not include a supervised internship or any clinical training (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014).

The formal academic training of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario is at best, somewhat limited, and at worst, nonexistent (Nadon, Samson, Gazzola & Thériault, 2016). Moreover, the identified theoretical foundations of the guidance and career education AQ, as outlined in the course guidelines (see Ontario College of Teachers, 2014), do not reflect the competency standards established by career and guidance counselling organizations, such as the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG, 2004). Rather, AQ course guidelines reflect the *Standards for the Teaching Profession*, a part of the Ontario College of Teachers act (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014). These guidelines are teaching and teacher-focused and do not reflect the main areas of practice related to the domain of career and guidance counselling (i.e., theories of counselling, theories of guidance and career counselling, or testing).

A recent study demonstrated that there are numerous negative consequences resulting from the imprecise and limited training required to fulfill the role of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario high schools. Nadon, Samson, Gazzola, and Thériault (2016) described the practices of career and guidance counsellors as not being grounded in a scientific theoretical framework. Rather, guidance and career counsellors in Ontario use past teaching experiences, their intuition, and the informal supervision of senior guidance counsellors, as guides to perform their duties.

Dietsche (2013) examined Ontario high school career and guidance counsellors' practices, and found that guidance and career counsellors spend a small portion of their time providing career counselling to students (25%), with the remainder of their time (75%) being spent on academic issues (40%), personal counselling (20%), and social issues (15%). Adding to the fact that career and guidance counsellors spend a small portion of their time providing career counselling, research has also identified a discrepancy between the actual role of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario schools, and the role outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education (Dietsche, 2013; Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996).

In summary, the issues around the tasks accomplished by career and guidance counsellors that have been identified and described in research emerging from Québec and the United-States appears to be mainly resulting from expectations that are imposed upon career and guidance counsellors by the schools' administration. This systemic problem, as described by Foster (2010), depends very much on the context in which career and guidance counsellors practice.

On the other hand, in Ontario, the issues surrounding the profession of career and guidance counselling appear to result from insufficient training. Indeed, in Ontario's high schools, teachers/career and guidance counsellors not only dedicate a small portion of their time to career and guidance counselling, but they also do not seem to have the formal training required to provide the necessary services to their students in line with international standards (International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), 2004).

Objectives

Given the lack of supervision and formal training currently provided to career and guidance counsellors in Ontario, it was deemed important to examine how they identify, conceptualize, and describe the tasks they perform. Consequently, the first objective of this research was to identify and describe the different tasks accomplished by career and guidance counsellors.

In relation to the first objective, the second objective of this study was to assess how Ontario career and guidance counsellors perceived their level of competency in relation to the international standards.

Method

Sample

Seventy-three career and guidance counsellors working for the 12 French-language school boards that exist in Ontario responded to the study questionnaires. Seventy-four percent of participants reported to be working as a career and guidance counsellor on a full-time basis, while 26% of participants reported working part-time as teachers and part-time as career and guidance counsellors in their high school. Furthermore, 52 participants reported their gender to be female (71.23%) while 21 reported to be male (28.77%), with a mean age of 44 years. Participants reported to have an average of 17 years of experience as a teacher and an average of 8 years of experience as a career and guidance counsellor. In relation to the training participants had received in order to be considered a career and guidance counsellor, 3% reported not having completed any of the AQ courses, while 22% had completed part one, 12% had completed part one and two, and 63% had completed part one, two, and three.

Instruments

Tasks Accomplished by Career and Guidance Counsellors. In order to develop an accurate list of tasks performed by career and guidance counsellors in Ontario, three distinct steps were undertaken. Specifically, (a) eighteen career and guidance counsellors were individually interviewed by the main author during which time they were asked to list and discuss the different tasks they performed at their school; (b) from those interviews, the first and fourth authors identified and described seventeen different tasks performed by guidance counsellors in Ontario; finally (c) three focus groups in three different school boards were consulted in order to corroborate the study's findings. In total, 14 guidance counsellors participated in the three different focus groups. Participants in all three focus groups confirmed that the list was representative of the daily tasks they accomplished, and that these had been adequately and accurately described.

As described in Table 1, seventeen tasks or practices were identified. Respondents were asked to rate them following a two-step procedure. The first procedure consisted of assessing each task using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not important* (1) *to very important (*5). The second procedure consisted of providing an estimation of the percentage of time allocated for each task. The electronic questionnaire calculated the total amount of time delegated to each activity and ensured that the total percentages added up to 100 for each participant.

Career and Guidance Counselling-related Knowledge and Skills. Since, as previously discussed, career and guidance counsellors in Ontario lack formal training, it was deemed important to assess their perceived level of knowledge and skills of 13 essential competencies associated with the practice of career and guidance counselling, as identified by the College of Career and Guidance Counsellors of Québec and the IAEVG. Participants rated the 13 essential competencies on 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all mastered* (1) *to very well mastered* (5). The list included *theoretical* (e.g., theories of vocational development), *technical* (e.g., knowledge of tests and measurement), and *practical* aspects (e.g., job search strategies) of the 13 essential competencies associated with career and guidance counselling. Among the 13 essential competencies associated with the practice of career and guidance counselling, participants were asked to select 5 tasks for which they believed they might benefit from additional training.

Procedure

The questionnaire was made available to participants online through the main author's web page (www.choixdecarriere.com) over the course of three months. All twelve French-language school boards in the prov-

Table 1

Descriptions of the tasks undertaken by Career and Guidance Counsellors Working in French Language Secondary Schools

Tasks	Descriptions
Informing students (one on one)	Regarding postsecondary education programs, careers, and job market trends
Organizing academic and professional information relating to students	Reading information, filing documents, planning career fairs, contacting postsecondary institutions, etc.
Providing information to students	Regarding bursaries and financial aid
Managing students' academic progress	For instance, regarding: enrolment, course selection, student scheduling
Participating in the school's promotional and public relations activities	Organizing school tours for new students, visiting feeder schools, information kisosks for the school
Providing consultation	To teachers as well as other professionals in the school and to the members of the administration
Providing individual career counselling	To students so as to promote the development of their self-awareness
Testing through the use of psychometric tools	For example, to assist students with their career choices using recognized and standardized tests such as: Strong, Jackson, GROP, etc.
Providing personal (and individual) counselling	Crisis situations, anxiety, emotional problems, etc
Providing classroom instruction	For example, within the scope of the GLC2O course
Completing various tasks	Completings tasks assigned by the school principal
Collaborating within multidisciplinary teams	Collaborate on interventions to promote student success and learning
Guiding students using career-related software	For instance, with tools that help students make career or academic choices : "Career Cruising"
Assisting with job searches and co-op placements	Assisting students who are writing a curriculum vitae (cv)
Managing other activities	Such as the graduation ceremonies or sport teams
Paperwork	Managing student files
Planning interventions and activities	Specifically geared towards helping grade 11 and 12 students choose career paths and postsecondary school programs

ince of Ontario agreed to participate in the study. Each School Board forwarded the invitation to participate in the study to each of their high school career and guidance counsellors via email. This research was approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, and informed consent was obtained from all participating career and guidance counsellors online prior to the completion of any study questionnaires through the study's website.

Results

All of the analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.0.

Relationship Between Perceived Importance and Time Allocation for Each Task

As can be seen in Table 2, managing students' academic progress (M = 4.86, SD = .35), informing students (M = 4.60, SD = .57), and planning interventions and activities (M = 4.46, SD = .56) were perceived as the most important tasks undertaken by career and guidance counsellors. On the other hand, providing personal counselling (M = 2.93, SD = 1.08), assisting with job searches and co-op placements (M = 3.07, SD = .81), and completing various tasks (M = 3.37, SD = 1.10) were perceived as less important.

As for time allocated to the various tasks associated with career and guidance counselling, participants reported that they generally dedicated most of their time to informing students and managing students' academic progress (respectively, M = 9.86, SD = 5.71 and M = 16.80, SD = 8.77). However, participants claimed that they spent the least amount of time completing various tasks (M = 2.56, SD = 2.15) and assisting with job searches and co-op placements (M = 2.44, SD = 2.02). Whereas participants spent a great deal of time informing students and managing their academic progress, they reported spending much less time providing individual career counselling (M = 5.89, SD = 3.68). Descriptively, these results demonstrate that the perceived importance of tasks is generally

Table 2

Importance and Time Allocated to Each Task

Tasks	Importance				Time allocation (%)			
	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Informing students (one on one)	4.60	.57	3	5	9.86	5.71	0	30
Organizing academic and professional information relating to students	4.12	.73	2	5	6.77	4.77	0	35
Providing information to students	4.11	.64	3	5	5.01	2.92	0	15
Managing students' academic progress	4.86	.35	4	5	16.80	8.77	0	48
Participating in the school's promotional and public relations activities	3.67	1.05	1	5	5.18	3.13	0	15
Providing consultation	3.66	.71	1	5	4.62	2.45	0	10
Providing individual career counselling	4.29	.74	2	5	5.89	3.68	0	20
Testing through the use of psychometric tools	3.48	1.00	1	5	2.80	2.62	0	10
Providing personal (and individual) counselling	2.93	1.08	1	5	5.01	3.99	0	21
Providing classroom instruction	4.03	.97	1	5	5.95	5.16	0	30
Completing various tasks	3.37	1.01	1	5	2.56	2.15	0	9
Collaborating within multidisciplinary teams	4.25	.80	2	5	7.90	5.67	0	40
Guiding students using career-related software	3.96	.86	2	5	4.62	2.98	0	15
Assisting with job searches and co-op placements	3.07	.81	1	5	2.44	2.02	0	9
Managing other activities	3.45	1.09	1	5	4.43	3.61	0	20
Paperwork	3.50	1.15	1	5	4.41	3.96	0	25
Planning interventions and activities	4.46	.56	3	5	5.78	3.81	0	20

commensurate to the amount of time career and guidance counsellors allocate to them. Notwithstanding, further analyses were essential in order to better understand the individual differences from a between and within-subjects perspective.

Since the data were not normally distributed, a rank-based procedure was utilized (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2013). Consequently, the importance of each task was ranked from 1 (*the least important*) to 17 (*the most important*) and the amount of time allocated to each task was also ranked, namely from 1 (*tasks associated with the lowest time allocation*) to 17 (*tasks associated with the highest time allocation*). The average rank per task is presented in Table 3. Friedman's test was found to be significant [$\chi^2(16) = 397.96$, $p < .01$] for the ranking of the perceived importance of tasks, suggesting that each was associated with a specific rank by each participant. In addition, Kendall's W was found to be .34, indicating a moderate agreement between career and guidance counsellors. More specifically, managing students' academic progress (Average Rank = 14.22) and informing students (Average Rank = 12.79) received the highest ranks.

Similarly, Friedman's test was found to be significant [$\chi^2(16) = 369.30$, $p < .01$] in terms of time allocated to each task, indicating participants specifically ranked and ordered the amount of time spent per activity. Kendall's W was found to be a value of .32, which also suggests a moderate agreement across the sample. Post-hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank test of paired comparisons indicated that more time was allocated to managing students' academic progress ($Z = -3.81$, $p < .01$) and providing personal (and individual) counselling ($Z = -5.29$, $p < .01$). Alternatively, career and guidance counsellors appeared to allocate less time to: providing information to students ($Z = 2.08$, $p = .04$), testing through the use of psychometric tools ($Z = 2.37$, $p = .02$), providing classroom instruction ($Z = 2.00$, $p < .05$), completing various tasks ($Z = 2.60$, $p < .01$), and planning interventions and activities ($Z = 2.84$, $p < .01$).

In order to conduct a within-subject comparison, the Wilcoxon signed ranks test was also used. Results ranged from $Z = -.96$ ($p = .34$) to $Z = 0$ ($p = 1.00$) with a median of $Z = -.22$. In other words, about 49% of

Table 3

Ranks for Importance and Time Allocation to Each Task

Tasks	Rank for importance		Rank for time allocation		Wilcoxon signed-rank test	
	M	SD	M	SD	Z	*p*
Informing students (one on one)	12.79	2.99	12.76	3.82	.67	.50
Organizing academic and professional information relating to students	10.34	3.12	10.70	3.55	.81	.42
Providing information to students	9.92	2.88	8.74	3.87	2.08	.04
Managing students' academic progress	14.22	2.01	15.48	2.71	-3.81	< .01
Participating in the school's promotional and public relations activities	8.03	4.37	8.99	3.63	-1.64	.10
Providing consultation	7.56	3.05	8.52	3.38	-1.87	.06
Providing individual career counselling	10.95	3.65	9.99	3.78	-1.85	.06
Testing through the use of psychometric tools	6.88	4.23	5.63	3.95	2.37	.02
Providing personal (and individual) counselling	4.62	3.75	8.45	4.09	-5.29	< .01
Providing classroom instruction	9.77	4.29	9.03	4.74	2.00	.04
Completing various tasks	6.53	4.20	5.21	3.38	2.60	< .01
Collaborating within multidisciplinary teams	10.94	3.92	11.47	3.95	-.87	.38
Guiding students using career-related software	9.37	3.95	8.45	3.87	-1.48	.14
Assisting with job searches and co-op placements	4.78	2.84	4.73	3.43	.65	.52
Managing other activities	7.08	3.94	7.49	4.40	-.43	.67
Paperwork	7.45	4.81	7.55	4.50	-.01	.99
Planning interventions and activities	11.76	3.31	9.79	4.23	2.84	< .01

career and guidance counsellors participating in this study were more likely to allocate additional time to the tasks they considered as most important, while 44% engaged in opposing behaviour. Nonetheless, no significant results were found to support that the rank associated with the perceived importance of tasks was similar to the rank associated with time allocation within the present sample.

How Career and Guidance Counsellors Knowledge and Skills relate to Tasks

As the number of career and guidance counsellors' identified knowledge, skills, and tasks was too voluminous, a cluster analysis was chosen to reorganize them into subgroups. Data from the rating procedure were computed using the Ward method and squared Euclidean distances. Thus, tasks were grouped according to the similarity of perceived importance reported by respondents. The number of clusters was determined by inspecting the scree plot of coefficients (Yim & Ramdeen, 2015), and a four-cluster solution was found to be the most suitable. The first cluster comprised four tasks that encapsulated more *individual-oriented career activities* (Tasks 1, 4, 7, and 17). The second cluster included seven tasks more related to group-oriented career activities (Tasks 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, and 13), whereas the third cluster included four tasks that were more consistent with *administrative-oriented career activities* (Tasks 9, 14, 15, and 16). Finally, the fourth cluster was composed of two tasks that corresponded to *technical-oriented career activities* (Tasks 8 and 11). On average, individual-oriented career activities (M = 4.55, SD = .35) were perceived as *very important* while group-oriented (M = 3.97, SD = .47), administrative-oriented (M = 3.58, SD = .57), and technical-oriented career activities (M = 3.42, SD = .83) were considered to be *somewhat important.*

Following the method proposed by Bertrand, Peters, Pérée and Hansez (2010), the percentage of time allocated to each cluster, associated with each career and guidance counsellor was calculated. Subsequently, the association of these factors to career and guidance counsellors' perceived level of knowledge and skills was calculated and presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Level of Mastery Perceived by Participants for the Core Skills and Specific Knowledge Related to Career and Guidance Counselling

	Descriptive statistics		Correlations with tasks clusters			
	M	SD	ICA	GCA	ACA	TCA
Theories of vocational development	2.15	1.00	.03	-.08	-.07	.24*
Mastery and use of a specific theoretical approach in counselling	2.32	.96	.06	.14	-.20	.01
Knowledge of tests and measurement	1.60	.92	.05	-.13	-.09	.31**
Providing professional and academic information	2.95	.33	.26*	.14	-.50**	.11
Group facilitation	2.89	.46	-.06	.26*	-.15	-.03
Job search strategies	2.37	.94	.18	-.02	-.26*	.13
Psychology of human development and personality	2.43	.91	.08	.09	-.16	-.06
Knowledge of psychopathology and mental health	1.82	.99	-.13	.05	.04	.18
Learning support	2.89	.46	-.03	.01	.05	-.03
Working with multicultural and diverse populations	2.32	.96	-.12	.10	.03	.07
Ethics and standards of practice	2.75	.66	.00	.07	-.04	-.04
Use of career models to facilitate decision-making	2.59	.81	.02	.09	-.15	.11
Use of self-exploration and planning programs in careers	2.64	.77	.08	.05	-.28*	.29*

Note. ICA = Individual-oriented career activities, GCA = Group-oriented career activities, ACA = Administrative-oriented career activities, TCA = Technical-oriented career activities.* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

As it is clearly demonstrated, career and guidance counsellors who reported to allocate a high percentage of time to individual-oriented career activities also reported a high perceived level of skills related to providing professional and academic information ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, participants who stated that they spent more time on group-oriented career activities also reported a high-perceived level of group facilitation ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). On the other hand, a negative correlation was found between percentage of time allocated to administrative-oriented career activities and perceived level of knowledge and skills related to providing professional and academic information ($r = -.50$, $p < .01$), use of self-exploration and planning programs in careers ($r = -.28$, $p < .05$), and job search strategies ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$). Finally, when career and guidance counsellors were found to allot a high percentage of time to technical-oriented career activities, they were also likely to report a high perceived level of knowledge and skills related to knowledge of tests and measurement ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), use self-exploration and planning programs in careers ($r = .29$, $p < .01$), and in theories of vocational development ($r = .24$, $p < .01$). In summary, the results demonstrate that the manner in which career and guidance counsellors allocate their time across the various tasks is associated with differences in perceived level of knowledge and skills.

Perceived Competence and Need for Continuing Education

Given the variation in participants' perceived level of knowledge and skills, their self-reported perceived competence and need for continuing education was assessed. In general, participants identified 5 themes for which they would require further training (See Table 5). The task which participants identified as needing the most additional training consisted of theories of vocational development (24.7% or respondents), followed by testing through the use of psychometric tools (17.8% of respondents).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the current practices of career and guidance counsellors in the province of Ontario. Furthermore, their perceived level of competency was examined.

Table 5

Tasks Associated with a Perceived Need for Continuing Education

Task	Percentage of Career and Guidance Counsellors who Endorsed this Task
Counselling theories	24.7 %
Testing through the use of psychometric tools	17.8 %
Ethics	15.1 %
Psychopathology and mental health	6.8 %
Group work	5.5 %
Counselling skills associated with specific populations: mental health, immigrants, sexual orientation, etc.	5.5 %

The current study's findings suggest that career and guidance counsellors perceive administrative-type tasks, such as managing students' academic progress or planning interventions and activities, as most important. When the amount of time spent on activities was examined, career and guidance counsellors reported that they spent the greatest amount of time managing students' academic progress and providing individual counselling to students. In fact, further analyses showed that nearly half of career and guidance counsellors reported spending the most time on tasks they considered being most important for their work. Finally, a cluster analysis was conducted in order to examine the manner in which career and guidance counsellors' knowledge and skills related to the perceived importance they attributed to tasks. In essence, individual-oriented career activities were found to be most important, and overall, career and guidance counsellors appear to allocate their time according to their perceived competence for the tasks being accomplished.

The results obtained through the current study suggest that there may be a correlation between the perceived importance of tasks performed by career and guidance counsellors, and their perceived feelings of competence. More specifically, from a descriptive perspective (see Table IV), the level of mastery perceived by participants in terms of the competencies related to career and guidance counselling, is surprisingly low. This finding needs to be put into context to pre-existing findings. Indeed, fifteen years ago a study conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2002) showed that with the exception of Québec, the training of career and guidance counsellors in Canada was insufficient. In fact, there is no existing training standard designated for use by career and guidance counsellors in Ontario (OECD, 2002; OECD, 2004). Eight years later, Keats and Laitsch (2010) confirmed the OECD's statement by reporting that Canadian guidance counsellors, including career and guidance counsellors from Ontario, are typically teachers with very limited training in career and guidance counselling. A qualitative study conducted by Nadon, Samson, Gazzola, and Thériault (2016) further showed that the formal academic training of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario is at best, somewhat limited, and at worst, nonexistent.

The current research not only confirms but also adds to previous findings (Keats & Laitsch, 2010; Nadon, Samson, Gazzola, & Thériault, 2016; OECD, 2002) by demonstrating

the consequences of Ontarian career and guidance counsellors' lack of formal training. Specifically, results of the current study suggest that career and guidance counsellors in Ontario do not perceive themselves as competent in the core practice of career and guidance counselling, for instance in topics such as: theories of vocational development; knowledge of psychopathology and mental health; and knowledge of tests and measurement.

Given the findings obtained through this research, it is difficult not to consider the following question: how do career and guidance counsellors in Ontario meet the various needs of students in Ontario schools? While meeting the general needs of students does not necessarily require an in-depth knowledge and clinical training, the opposite is true when attempting to meet the needs of students struggling with more severe career indecision and related issues. Nevertheless, it is clear that promoting self-awareness, the use of standardized tests, and dealing with severe career indecision, crisis situations, anxiety, and emotional problems requires specialized clinical training, theoretical knowledge, as well as clinical supervision. This leads to a second question; that of whether the current practices of career and guidance counsellors in Ontario meet ethical standards knowing that they did not receive the necessary clinical or formal training to perform these aforementioned tasks.

The current study's results show that participants spend an important percentage of their time on tasks unrelated to career and guidance counselling. Secondly, as previously mentioned, it appears that participants' perceived competence in tasks related to career and guidance counselling is rather low. Finally, there appears to be a relation between the perceived skill level and amount of time spent on various tasks performed by career and guidance counsellors, which are surprisingly of an administrative nature.

These results are in line with the current literature in career and guidance counselling. In particular, research demonstrates that American and Canadian guidance and career counsellors tend to report challenges associated with the different aspects of their role within the high school system. First of all, Brett and Myers (1999) reported that career and guidance counsellors' training might not be in line with the needs of students or the school. The current study's findings not only complement those of Brott and Myers (1999), but also contribute to the literature by providing information about the context in French-language secondary schools in Ontario. Given the paucity of research on career and guidance counselling in Canada and Ontario in general, the current study's findings demonstrate that in Ontario career and guidance counsellors likely do not meet the needs of their students simply because they report feeling incompetent and tend to allocate more time to administrative tasks rather than the core tasks associated with career and guidance counselling.

In comparison to career and guidance counsellors working in Québec, career and guidance counsellors in Ontario seem to have a very different experience. For instance, one of the main issues or challenges for career and guidance counsellors in Québec is that they must adhere to very specific tasks, as prescribed by the school board, but not necessarily to tasks they deem to be important or essential to their profession (Viviers, 2016). While this is often a source of frustration for career and guidance counsellors in Québec, who would prefer to dedicate their time to tasks that they perceive to be more important (Viviers, 2016), the reality in Ontario is quite different. Specifically, the tasks prescribed to career and guidance counsellors in Ontario by the school board, and the official policy of the ministry of Ontario as described in the document entitled *Creating Pathways to Success* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013), are rather vague. This may explain why career and guidance counsellors in Ontario appear to engage in such a variety of tasks, for instance seventeen were identified in the current study. Furthermore, the current study highlights that the amount of time spent on these tasks by career and guidance counsellors is associated with their perceived competence rather than the tasks that have been identified as

essential when it comes to career and guidance counselling. In other words, students attending French-language secondary schools in Ontario are not receiving services commensurate to international standards, but rather to the perceived level of competence of the career and guidance counsellor. Hence, the quality of services varies from school to school and counsellor to counsellor.

The current study must be considered in light of certain limitations. Firstly, this research was conducted in a minority context, specifically a French-language school system in Ontario. Even though school and guidance counsellors in Ontario, whether in the English or French school boards, are subject to follow the same policies and receive the same training, results cannot necessarily be generalized to career and guidance counsellors working in the English school system. Secondly, there are about 125 career and guidance counsellors working in French-language secondary schools in Ontario so it was particularly difficult to reach a large number of participants in the present study. Finally, while our focus was to examine the perceived importance and amount of time allocated to each task, further investigations should be conducted. Specifically, considering the variety of career and guidance challenges experienced by Franco-Ontarian secondary school students (Sovet, DiMillo & Samson, 2016), the appropriateness and effectiveness of how these tasks are performed and selected should be examined.

In conclusion, the current study provides another argument to support the need for additional training for career and guidance counsellors in Ontario, not only to better support students' needs, but to increase career and guidance counsellors' awareness of the essential tasks associated with career and guidance counselling and to increase their feelings of competence. A second important implication that can be derived from this study's findings includes the fact that it might be important to revise and further specify what tasks should be accomplished by career and guidance counsellors, so as to provide a more consistent service for students and schools in general throughout the province of Ontario.

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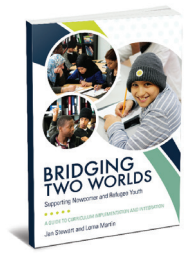

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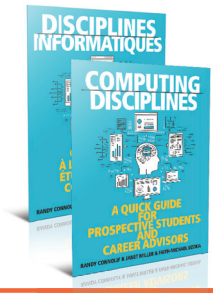

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Skills for the 21st Century: A Meta-Synthesis of Soft-Skills and Achievement

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Abstract

Higher education can be both memorable and a vital pathway to the workforce. However, entering post-secondary life with the cognitive ability to handle the academic rigor is often not enough to succeed and persist in an environment that requires students to also possess soft-skills such as resilience, adaptability, perseverance, self-advocacy, and self-regulation (Adams, 2012; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Egalite, Mills, & Greene, 2016). Therefore, this meta-synthesis sought to gain a better understanding of soft-skills deficits in adult learners by synthesizing current Canadian studies on the topic. It was found that interventions in higher education that resulted in soft-skills acquisition among learners were commonly geared toward graduate students and tied to social interactions among community agencies, faculty members, and peer groups. Thus, further research is discussed around examining the reciprocal effects of peer-mentoring on the soft-skills development of first-year undergraduate students, as well as the long-term impact this approach might have on student retention, achievement, and success beyond higher education.

Keywords: higher education; soft-skills; non-cognitive skills; student success; student retention; workforce; job-ready; achievement

The idea that students who enter higher education have equipped themselves with the necessary tools to navigate all intricacies of post-secondary life is a misconception in need of addressing (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2014). Students who gain admission into college or university have undoubtedly done so by working hard. However, their ability to remain in school, persist to graduation, and flourish during their time there, is a challenge facing many learners, as well as post-secondary institutions in terms of facilitating such an experience. On average, 20-25% of students in Canadian higher education withdraw from their studies in their first year, while about 60% of those who begin a program complete their credential (Grayson & Grayson, 2003). Student attrition rates drop slightly lower when students who transfer to another program or institution are excluded from the calculation of attrition rates. For that reason, statistical data stemming from a longitudinal study out of Atlantic Canada suggested that a more accurate calculation of post-secondary student attrition to be around 15.1% for university students, and 22.6% for college students after the first year of study (Finnie & Qiu, 2009).

It is important to note that this data is reflective of only institutions within Atlantic Canada and did not take into account students who transfer to institutions outside of the region, only within. Furthermore, the data were limited to learners between the ages of 17-20 years old, thereby excluding attrition data of older learners, a population who are often prone to early departure from their studies (Polinsky, 2003). Even at slightly lower rates, attrition numbers in the Canadian higher education system still remain at significant levels, with equally significant implications. Students who withdraw early from their studies miss out on the type of personal development uniquely gained from the post-secondary experience. These students also forfeit time, money, and the potential for greater employment opportunities often facilitated by a post-secondary education (Drea, 2004; Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Lee, 2017; Stelnicki, Nordstokke, & Saklofske, 2015). From an institutional perspective, student attrition results in a loss of tuition revenues, potential government

funding, and can have an overall negative impact on the local and global economies (Drea, 2004; Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Lee, 2017). What may be contributing to these alarming attrition numbers is an assumption that students who gain admission into college or university are somehow equipped with both the cognitive and non-cognitive skills and abilities required to achieve academic and social successes. Nevertheless, even the most brilliant minds that enter post-secondary life can find hardship in their journey when confronted with an unfamiliar learning environment, a new social structure, unknown school policies, processes, and services, as well as when faced with greater independence (Stelnicki et al., 2015). This is especially true when lacking the necessary skill set to be able to cope with the stressors of school, to effectively work and communicate with others, to seek out relevant information, to problem solve, or to exhibit the necessary motivation to persevere past obstacles. Entering higher education with a deficiency in these skills could be the underlying reason why despite a growth in student retention strategies (Berger, Ramirez, & Lyons, 2012), student attrition rates have remained stagnant in North America for the past three decades (Fisher & Engemann, 2009). Current day retention programs designed to combat student attrition may prove to be less effective if built around the premise that students have both the cognitive and non-cognitive skills to engage effectively with the social and academic resources designed for their success and retention (Savitz-Romer & Bouffard, 2014).

Entering higher education with the cognitive ability to handle the academic rigor is often not enough to succeed and persist in an environment that requires students to also possess non-cognitive skills such as resilience, optimism, adaptability, conscientiousness, motivation, perseverance, reliability, self-advocacy, and self-regulation (Adams, 2012; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Egalite et al., 2016). These skills, also commonly referred to in the literature as *soft-skills, 21st century skills, or life skills,* will be used interchangeably throughout this article, and are said to not only impact personal development and academic success; but are also considered to be key factors for career and life advancements (Brunello & Schlotter, 2011; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Padhi, 2014).

Non-cognitive skills are considered to be relational, involving both personal and interpersonal skills (Carblis, 2008). They are skills associated with "behaviors, attitudes, and strategies" (Egalite et al., 2016, p. 28), which typically display core competencies rooted in emotional intelligence (Carblis, 2008; National Soft Skills Association, 2015). E*motional intelligence*, a term coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), centres on having the ability to self-identify and regulate one's own emotions in addition to interpreting and responding accordingly to the emotions of other people (Chan, Petrisor, & Bhandari, 2014; Martinez, 2010; National Soft Skills Association, 2015). A person with high emotional intelligence is not only self-aware and able to control their own feelings, but is also able to pick up on surrounding social cues and react in an appropriate manner. On the other hand, possessing an apt level of non-cognitive skills allows one to react or conduct one's self in an emotionally intelligent manner. Therefore, in addition to potential educational benefits, non-cognitive skills can be vital for global citizenry, workforce adaptability, and personal development. For example, fostering non-cognitive skills has become a recognized component for developing Canada's knowledge-based economy in an increasingly global labour market. A labour market that requires individuals to occupy skills that will enable them to continually learn and grow in their roles, to think critically, and to communicate effectively in ways that are socially acceptable (Borwein, 2014; Lennon, 2010). According to Stuckey and Munro (2013), lacking suitable skills to meet employer needs, or mismatches in skills where the abilities of staff members are not fully utilized is estimated to cost the province of Ontario "up to $24.3 billion in forgone GDP and $3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues annually" (p. i).

While soft-skills can encompass many different traits, and are therefore difficult to

measure, employers from around the world have shared their concerns about soft-skills deficits among post-secondary graduates attempting to enter the workforce (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, 2010; Kember, Leung & Ma, 2007; Peel Halton Workforce Development Group, 2015). Learners seemingly progress through elementary, secondary, and post-secondary studies without garnering the soft-skills necessary for workforce readiness and career advancements. Nevertheless, the Canadian government has acknowledged the dire need to address the skills gap through a newly released proposal by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth titled, *Building A Highly Skilled and Resilient Canadian Workforce Through The FutureSkills Lab* (2017). The proposal calls for the creation of a non-governmental organization called the FutureSkills Lab to mobilize and work with various stakeholders (some of which would include government bodies, employers, labour unions, educational institutions, researchers, and more) to provide financial support for pilot projects aimed at bridging the skills gap (this includes soft-skills), while also working to disseminate project outcomes to inform best practices (Advisory Council on Economic Growth, 2017). The hope is to build a strong and cohesive strategy aimed at propelling Canadians toward skill competencies required for the 21st century. This calculated effort illustrates that the attainment of non-cognitive skills is by no means a simplistic process.

Literature has pointed to the formation of non-cognitive abilities occurring as early as in utero and throughout the early to adolescent years of life when the areas of the human brain that control emotions are considered to be the most absorptive and malleable (Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Goleman, 2005). A person's genetic make-up, early environmental experiences, and to a large extent, their parental influences, are said to be key factors in the growth of emotional intelligence, and, by extension, non-cognitive skills (Blau & Currie, 2006; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Goleman, 2005). Although literature has pointed to the development of non-cognitive skills or traits as being less likely to occur in adulthood (Almlund, Duckworth, Heckman, & Kautz, 2011; Cunha & Heckman, 2007), studies also suggest that personality traits have the capacity of being transformed throughout a person's lifecycle (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006; Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2011). However, little is known about soft-skills interventions at the adult stage of life and its effects on student success, retention, and personal development, especially in the Canadian context of higher education. Thus, the following study sought to investigate, collect, and interpret Canadian literature that intentionally or unintentionally brokered the topic of adult soft-skills and achievement at the post-secondary level and beyond. Data gathered in this study were used to gain a better understanding of soft-skills deficits in adult learners and the impact fostering these skills might have on personal and societal advancements. One research question guided the framework for this study: *How do soft-skills impact Canadian post-secondary learners?*

Methodology

Instrumentation

A meta-synthesis methodology was employed to take stock of the current body of knowledge available on the topic of soft-skills and education in the Canadian post-secondary context. This method was used to gather current and relevant literature, and also to integrate the findings so that a fuller, more holistic interpretation of the data would surface (Finfgeld, 2003). A collective analysis of data, rather than an analysis based off of singular findings was deemed to be the most effective method for understanding the phenomenon (Finfgeld, 2003).

Research Procedure

Research was conducted over the span of four months through which data were gathered by scouring journal databases, online search engines (Google Scholar, general Internet searches), and through article reference lists to locate any current studies on the topic. The databases searched included ERIC (EBS-

CO), ProQuest: CBCA Complete – including its subsets Canadian Business & Current Affairs (CBCA), and ProQuest: CBCA Complete: Social Sciences. Advanced searches were performed using search filters and a variety of keywords, keyword combinations, and Boolean operators. Keywords searched included: *life skills*, *soft-skills*, *non-cognitive skills*, *21st century skills*, *higher education*, *post-secondary*, *college*, *university*, *student success*, *workforce*, *job-ready*, *emotional intelligence*, *social intelligence*, and *achievement*.

Selection criterion. Selection criteria further narrowed search results to include only peer-reviewed journal articles that were of Canadian content and published within the past seven years. Therefore, only publications from January 1, 2010 and onward were identified. In total, results rendered 756 articles, which were reviewed for appropriate relevancy to the study topic at hand through a three-tiered screening process.

Screening process. During the initial screening 681 articles were eliminated based on the title of the article, article duplication, a scan of the abstract, clear evidence that the article was not of Canadian content, or that the article was not considered a research study. In total, 75 articles proceeded through secondary screening. In the second screening, abstracts for all 75 articles were reread and articles scanned for content. Any articles that mentioned any derivative of non-cognitive skills, adult learning, development, and/or schooling, remained and proceeded to the third and final screening process. It was determined at this stage that criteria needed to be updated to include only articles published within the last five years in order to ensure the research content remained current and relevant. In the final screening, all articles were read in their entirety. Articles not meeting the aforementioned screening criteria were eliminated, while the remaining became apart of this study. Additional articles were vetted throughout the screening processes as a result of article reference list checks. In total, 12 articles became a part of this meta-synthesis of literature (Figure 1).

Data Analysis

All articles included in this study were summarized, coded for themes and analyzed to determine the scope, similarities, differences, and shared findings (Creswell, 2012). Coding and the categorization of themes were done as a manual process. Each article was read in full at least three times. After the first reading a general sense of the articles, the key findings, and the main points surrounding soft-skills and learners were captured. Noted at this stage were general notions of soft-skills, the types of soft-skills interventions used, the reason for these interventions, the effected learner population or participant group studied, and the varied effects of soft-skills. Articles were again reviewed and a variety of words and phrases were extracted and coded using alphanumeric notations. The alphanumeric codes consisted of a number to note similar words or phrases combined with letters. The first three letters of the first author's surname were used to note which article the word or phrase came from. The coded words and phrases were ultimately segmented into broad categories that included *method or methodology*, *participant type*, *soft-skills impact*, and *other*. The *other* category included any words or phrases that fell outside of the core categories, but appeared to be significant to the article. Categories were sub-divided into themes by analyzing the frequency of reoccurring concepts among the articles.

After a third reading of the articles, short summaries of key findings for each article were written to help locate, connect, and highlight the emergent patterns, similarities and differences among the articles. Any additional connections found in the data were grouped together with notations made for reoccurring themes. Notations were also made for any variances found among the studies and interpretations of the data were reported as part of this meta-synthesis (Creswell, 2012).

Results and Discussion

The articles reviewed in this meta-synthesis covered a broad range of topics related

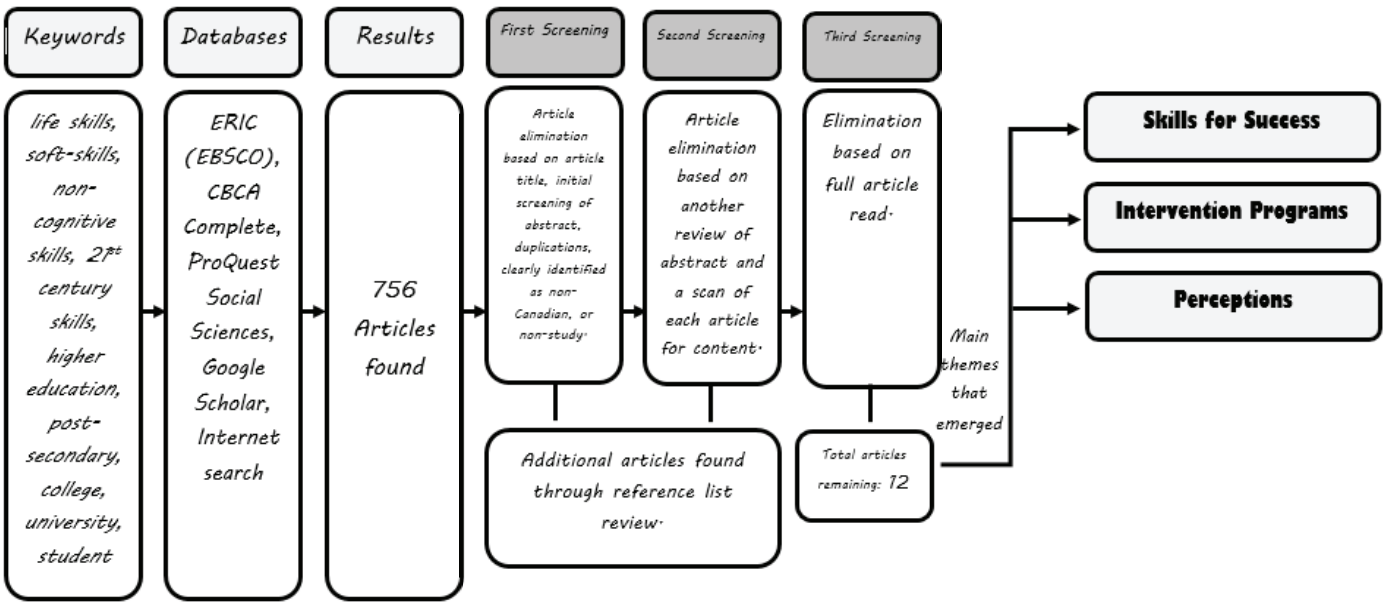

Figure 1. The screening process. This figure illustrates the screening process employed to retrieve data for the meta-synthesis.

to soft-skills with only one that held any specificity toward the perceived relational aspects of soft-skills and achievement among undergraduate learners (Stelnicki et al., 2015). However, all articles included in this meta-synthesis contributed to a rich understanding of emotional intelligence and soft-skills as being pivotal elements in a variety of contexts and environments. The data gathered and included in this meta-synthesis told a story of how emotional intelligence and soft-skills interconnected in multiple ways in everyday life. This held true whether through school, professional, social, or personal aspects of life.

Skills for Success

Possessing the appropriate skills for academic and professional success was determined to be the underlying driver for many of the studies reviewed. In two studies of medical residents, the importance of possessing emotional intelligence, and, by extension, an ability to work and communicate well with others, was seen as an invaluable social trait needed to foster healthy doctor-patient relationships in a profession that continues to cross medical disciplines and grow in complexity (Chan et al., 2014; McLeod & Sonnenberg, 2016). Chan et al. (2014) used the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test to measure the emotional intelligence of 39 orthopedic surgery residents. Their findings indicated that only four of the 39 medical residents who participated in the study displayed what was deemed to be a competent level of emotional intelligence. As a result, it was posited by Chan et al. (2014) that educational interventions needed to be considered in order to garner non-cognitive competencies among medical residents; specifically, "communication, teamwork and professionalism" (p. 92).

Further building on the idea of educational intervention for medical residents to foster non-cognitive skills was the McLeod and Sonnenberg (2016) study. Similar to Chan et al. (2014), a cross-sectional survey was used to measure levels of emotional intelligence. However, in the McLeod and Sonnenberg (2016) study, the results of 35 Canadian pediatric residents were sought. The findings highlighted that varied levels of emotional intelligence existed among study participants, which led McLeod and Sonnenberg (2016) to suggest that individual variability in emotional intelligence be accounted for when designing intervention programs.

Intervention Programs

There were four studies found which discussed an inter-

vention program through the use of a workshop or a course designed for either the explicit purpose of teaching soft-skills, or for which non-cognitive attributes were acquired as a by-product. From these studies it was determined that an individual's variability in emotional intelligence was often not the focus of the intervention. Nevertheless, studies conducted by Levkoe, Brail, and Daniere (2014), as well as Lund and Lee (2015) who purposefully integrated self-reflection in their pedagogy, were deemed to have come the closest to accounting for individual differences.

Courses. Levkoe et al. (2014) used a case study methodology to review a Service-Learning course for university graduate students called Planning for Change: Community Development in Practice. S*ervice-learning* is a pedagogical approach which seeks to merge "what appear to be separate realms of theory and practice by providing the opportunity to connect academic work and community development work" (Levkoe et al., 2014, p. 69). Over a period of eight months, the Planning for Change service-learning course examined by Levkoe et al. (2014), had students engage in a variety of activities that included: seminars with their faculty members and peers, reflections, self-evaluations, and outreach to community organizations for placement opportunities. Results showed learner outcomes to include a variety of non-cognitive attributes such as: improved communication, interpersonal, teamwork, and self-regulation skills (Levkoe et al., 2014). Levkoe et al. (2014) concluded that these critical employability skills were developed by participants as a result of the professional interactions they made in their community placements; a result of experiential learning.

Lund and Lee (2015) also used the service-learning approach to report findings from ten pre-service teachers who went through a program aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of diversity in the classroom in order to achieve cultural humility. Lund and Lee (2015) described cultural humility as a lifelong process that is reflective in nature and which aims to build greater understanding and empathy. The study could be considered quite important to the research of soft-skills deficits in post-secondary learners, as it aimed to address a fundamental trait of emotional intelligence by seeking to look beyond one's self in order to understand others. Study participants experienced placements in communities where they were able to engage with children and youth from predominantly immigrant-families. Although some participants of the study identified with marginalized groups, the pre and post interviews conducted with the pre-service teacher-participants over a span of 10 weeks, highlighted that many still held assumptions, misconceptions, and limited understandings about other cultures (Lund & Lee, 2015).

The Lund and Lee (2015) study aimed to counter the deficit-model thinking; a view that approaches the values of non-dominate groups as somehow lacking (Maitra, 2015). Combating the deficit-model way of thinking was attempted through lessons learned from classroom readings, experiences in the community with children from diverse groups, and through reflective assignments. The reflective exercises and self-evaluations in both the Levkoe et al. (2014) and Lund and Lee (2015) studies seemed to have personalized the learning for study participants by accounting for their unique life experiences, which in turn, seemingly came the closest to accounting for different levels of emotional intelligence and soft-skills. These two studies also took a collaborative approach by creating a course that sought community partnerships. This type of shared approach between the community and the academic domains speaks to Porter and Phelps (2014) assertions that *integrative learning* allows for a more holistic method of skills development. It creates opportunities for learners to "make connections across time and between domains of knowledge, skills, and contexts" (Porter & Phelps, 2014, p. 58). This was said to expand both skill competencies among learners and career possibilities upon graduation (Porter & Phelps, 2014).

Porter and Phelps (2014) did not test or implement a skill development intervention; instead they suggested modifications to the ways in which skills are attained by students

at the post-secondary level by examining the success of two graduate students who integrated industry and academic scholarship in their individual journeys toward attaining a PhD. The purpose was to address the growing number of PhD graduates seeking employment outside of academia, whether by choice or not (Porter & Phelps, 2014). Porter and Phelps (2014) argued that transferable skills learned from connecting professional experiences with academic work, better-equipped PhD graduates for the ever-evolving multi-disciplinary workforce of the 21st century. They recommended a formation of institutional partnerships with various industries to provide alternate forms of student mentorship outside of faculty members; the rationale being that this would translate into support for students considering pathways outside of academia (Porter & Phelps, 2014).

The aspects of community partnerships in the *integrated learning* model discussed by Porter and Phelps (2014) provided some comparability to the two *service-learning* model examples discussed in the Levkoe et al. (2014) and the Lund and Lee (2015) studies. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the concerns noted in these two service-learning examples. Levkoe et al. (2014) and Lund and Lee (2015) recognized service-learning courses as being a huge undertaking to implement due to the required resources. This included dedicated faculty time outside of the classroom to coordinate partnerships and initiatives, as well as institutional buy-in for sustainability. However, an alternative found to be used among institutions was workshops. Workshops were found to often be shorter in duration, self-contained within the institution, and capable of rendering skills development. Two examples of workshop interventions are discussed below.

Workshops. The first workshop example examined the attitudes of 24 graduate students at a large-sized Canadian university. The participants in the study enrolled in one of two 20-hour Teaching Assistant workshops that were designed to equip future teachers with the appropriate communication skills for a global workforce (Dimitrov, Dawson, Olsen, & Meadows, 2014). Both workshops, namely, the *Teaching Assistant Training Program* (TATP) and the *Teaching in the Canadian Classroom* program (TCC), were infused with an intercultural teaching component. The TATP included "a two-hour video case study on teaching in the intercultural classroom" (Dimitrov et al., 2014, p. 92), while the TCC included the same video case study, but also examined "cultural differences in communication styles, feedback styles, and expectations for teacher and student behavior throughout the workshop" (Dimitrov, et al., 2014, p. 92). The researchers conducted qualitative interviews of the graduate students to understand the impact of teacher development programs that integrate intercultural communication strategies. Although some of the questions raised in the interviews allowed for study participants to reflect on the workshop content, the questions did not appear to account for the same depth of reflection as cited in the Levkoe et al. (2014) and Lund and Lee (2015) studies.

However, results showed that graduate students who participated in the workshops were still able to gain a greater sense of awareness of their own cultural identities and assumptions. By extension, participants were able to recognize and appreciate the way in which various learners in the classrooms they taught participated in class, approached feedback, or sought help. Participants of the Dimitrov et al. (2014) study cited becoming more aware of non-verbal communications and were better equipped at brokering an appropriate use of high-context communication in the classroom, or when more detail was required to ensure a shared understanding among students with low-context communication. The skills learned were considered transferable beyond the teaching realm, resulted in a belief of greater intercultural respect, and benefited the overall interpersonal and facilitation skills of participants (Dimitrov et al., 2014).

Online workshop. The second workshop example was the only study that addressed soft-skills deficits among online post-secondary learners. The study focused on professional skills development, with the

acknowledgment that this largely encompassed a variety of soft-skills. The study, conducted by Gauvreau, Hurst, Cleveland-Innes and Hawranik (2016) focused on graduate students who were pursuing their studies using an asynchronous online format. These learners were said to lack opportunities to hone their professional skills since Teaching Assistant positions, public speaking, and other face-to-face interactions were not normally accessible to the online learner (Gauvreau et al., 2016). The study implemented three synchronous online workshops, each designed with a purposeful goal. The first workshop promoted peer collaboration and a variety of exercises to foster "an understanding of the role critical thinking plays in both academic and workplace writing" (Gauvreau et al., 2016, p. 94). The second focused on goal-setting and particular traits seen as necessary for workplace successes such as interpersonal and networking skills, while the third workshop explored coping strategies for personal success (Gauvreau et al., 2016). Although 61 graduate students partook in the study, only ten participated in the study's focus group that resulted in two emergent themes. Firstly, it was found that synchronous workshops fostered social connections, a communal sense of belonging, camaraderie among the students, and a feeling of less isolation (Gauvreau et al., 2016). Secondly, it was found that not only did participants benefit from the development of soft and professional skills, but there was also a realization amongst the participants as to the importance of these skills beyond the academic setting (Gauvreau et al., 2016). Social interactions, in this case online workshops where participants could engage with faculty members and peers in a synchronous fashion, were the necessary components for skill development. Furthermore, social interaction, whether with the community, with faculty members, or fellow peers, was found to be an essential ingredient in all four interventions mentioned. Yet, it is important to note that all four interventions found in the search of literature targeted graduate students, some of whom were enrolled in a teacher education field of study or sought the opportunity to be a teaching assistant. Therefore, the learning outcomes as well as the perceptions from the participants in all four interventions, although positive, might be resultant from their similarities as graduate students, or in the type of program they had chosen to pursue. Table 1 takes stock of these key similarities and differences among the four interventions.

Nevertheless, Porter and Phelps (2014) argued against using workshops or courses for professional development or to teach generic skills, citing that there is scarcity in the available research on actual measured gains of such interventions. Porter and Phelps (2014) pointed out that most interventions are only evaluated based on the perceptions of the participants engaged in the intervention. This arguably could produce an initial false-positive in success since it is measured on an initial feeling that is exclusive of any long-term effects that interventions might have on personal development, success, or actual skills retained. Likewise, it does not account for the effects on those who interact with a person who perceives that they have gained non-cognitive skills from a course or workshop. Although participants in the Dimitrov et al. (2014) study perceived a greater awareness of how their students negotiated their classroom environment, it would be interesting to know whether the students held similar beliefs about their skills gain as those held by their instructors. Equally as fascinating would be an understanding of the ripple effects of such interventions, such as, whether reciprocity of non-cognitive skills development occurs.

Therefore, although the next study falls outside of the post-secondary sector, it has been included as it further examines soft-skills interventions. Moreover, it speaks to soft-skills education at the adult level and provides insight into possible issues with the curricula of interventions and the manner in which they are developed and executed. It also provides a perspective from outside the realm of higher education, as it is not tied to any internal post-secondary curriculum, but rather is considered as a separate soft-skills training specifically for the purpose of future employability.

Table 1

Skill Development Interventions

Name of Study	Targeted Graduate Students	Teacher Education Program / TA Development Program	Used Critical Reflection	Course	Workshop
Dimitrov, N., Dawson, D. L., Olsen, K. C., & Meadows, K. N. (2014). Developing the intercultural competence of graduate students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 44*(3), 86-103.	✓	✓			✓
Gauvreau, S., Hurst, D., Cleveland-Innes, M., & Hawranik, P. (2016). Online professional skills workshops: Perspectives from distance education graduate students. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 17*(5), 91-108.	✓				✓
Levkoe, C. Z., Brail, S., & Daniere, A. (2014). Engaged pedagogy and transformative learning in graduate education: A service-learning case study. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 44*(3), 68-85.	✓		✓	✓	
Lund, D. E., & Lee, L. (2015). Fostering cultural humility among pre-service teachers: Connecting with children and youth of immigrant families through service-learning. *Canadian Journal of Education, 38*(2), 1-30.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Totals	4	2	2	2	2

Workshop Perceptions

Similar to the Lund and Lee (2015) study that sought to combat deficit-model thinking, the deficit-model thinking was also broached in the Maitra (2015) study. Maitra (2015) suggested that "soft-skill training programs in Canada" are often used as a means to conform racialized immigrants by devaluing skills carried over from their originating country (p. 65). The learners in these programs are assumed to possess "education, values, and cultures" that are considered to be lesser than the dominant "Canadian standard" (Maitra, 2015, p. 65). The study examined the experiences of 25 South Asian immigrant women who attended soft-skills training workshops in hopes of increasing their chances of employment in the Canadian workforce (Maitra, 2015). All of the women interviewed in the study were said to be highly educated, many with substantive professional experiences; however, they sought soft-skills training as their non-Canadian experiences and education were not easily recognized in the Canadian workforce (Maitra, 2015; Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick,

2014). Although participants perceived some aspects of gain from the soft-skills workshops, Maitra (2015) highlighted characteristics of the soft-skills training that spoke to a goal of conformity or that could be considered demeaning in nature. For example, Maitra (2015) noted examples of participants who were advised by their soft-skills instructors to "changed their names on the résumé to appear more Canadian" (p. 71), or to lose their accents. Some participants were instructed to brush their teeth or chew gum before a job interview as their instructors deemed this as acting with professionalism (Maitra, 2015). One participant commented on the comical nature of being instructed to chew gum before a job interview and further noted that such directive lacked necessity. These examples further highlighted the rationale asserted by Lund and Lee (2015) concerning the need to develop cultural humility.

Understanding others and recognizing one's own misconceptions of culture have been shown to be vital to learning experiences, as well as in one's ability to decipher between appropriate and inappropriate course content. This is especially true for instructors of soft-skills content, as content relates both directly and indirectly to their emotional intelligence; being self-aware, understanding their learners and responding in an appropriate manner. Maitra (2015) called for a more inclusive pedagogy in soft-skills training that fosters critical reflection and comprehensive discussions among stakeholders. This fortifies studies (Levkoe et al., 2014; Lund & Lee, 2015), which integrated critical reflection as a component of soft-skills curriculum. Alongside the Maitra (2015) study, there were two other studies that discussed immigrant soft-skills acquisition for the purpose of employment in the Canadian workforce.

Employer Perceptions

Skill utilization. Looking beyond soft-skills training and understanding how employers perceive soft-skills preparation among immigrant workers was important to address. This is especially true since analysis of census data from the 1996, 2001, and 2006 periods have shown individuals immigrating to Canada to be increasingly educated, yet their skills increasing underutilized in the Canadian workforce (Reitz et al., 2014). In fact, Reitz et al. (2014) found immigrants in the 2006 cohort to be between two and a half and three-times more likely to possess a university degree than the Canadian-born population. According to Reitz et al. (2014), immigrants are paid less than their Canadian-born counterparts even when they occupy "similar qualifications, are at similar ages, live in the same cities, have similar language knowledge, have similar racial backgrounds, and even work in the same occupational levels" (p. 17). Reitz et al. (2014) discussed social characteristics in their study, including racial and cultural differences as contributors to obstacles faced by immigrants seeking equity within the Canadian workforce (Reitz et al., 2014). An example was given of a Human Rights case in 1997 with Health Canada that showed the qualifications of ethnic minorities to be undervalued (Reitz et al., 2014). It was revealed that workplace promotions amongst this group were being stifled due to an unfounded notion that these workers possessed the technical skills, but were perceived to lack the soft-skills needed to communicate effectively or to make managerial-type decisions (Reitz et al., 2014).

Elrick (2015) further discussed employer perceptions in a study that examined the hiring practices of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada, and the effects on immigrant skill utilization. A case study methodology was employed through which 20 firms were profiled by gathering data from interviews with staff members responsible for the hiring within the company. Half of the companies interviewed said that if a candidate lacked soft-skills it would not be critical to their decision to hire, while four of the companies interviewed cited "analytical thinking and abstract problem solving" (Elrick, 2015, p. 809) as being essential skills needed for current and future work adaptability and employability. Key from Elrick's (2015) study was the mention of *habitus*, described as the product of a person's

unique traits, knowledge, and social environment. Whereas one's credentials and previous work experience does not necessarily equate to a successful hiring process, but holding a desirable personality trait that resonates with the employer could warrant greater odds of employment success (Elrick, 2015). Elrick (2015) found companies that rely on a cultural fit in their hiring practices had "the lowest ratio of immigrant employees (0-20%)" (p. 810). In the same vein, 25% of the companies interviewed in the study defined 'cultural fit' to mean mutual habitus (Elrick, 2015). This was hypothesized to put immigrants at a disadvantage since habitus is noted as being largely shared with others within the same geographical proximity (Elrick, 2015). Nevertheless, the study found that hiring practices generally differed from firm-to-firm, with some firms looking for candidates who graduated from particular institutions, and others who were more focused on finding candidates who tested well in varied technical and soft-skills, such as the ability to critically solve problems (Elrick, 2015). Since this study focused on one sector of the workforce, conclusions could not be drawn as to the hiring practices of different industries that may or may not value soft-skills more.

Learner Perceptions

In the context of understanding soft-skills and success among post-secondary learners, it was deemed important to address studies that approached the topic from the learner's perspective. One study was found which sought direct feedback from students about the attributes they felt made them successful or not, while another addressed possible sources that could influence attitudinal changes among learners.

In a study of undergraduate students between the years 2009 and 2011, students were asked to provide five words (or short phrases) that described themselves in attaining their goals, and five words that described what would prevent them from accomplishing their goals (Stelnicki, et al., 2015). It was found that students considered attributes such as "determination, focus, and drive," as well as being a hard-worker to be among the most cited words perceived as factors for success (Stelnicki et al., 2015, p. 222). Associated with lack of success included highly cited words such as stress, procrastination, and distractions (Stelnicki et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, Christofides, Hoy, Milla and Stengos (2015) concluded that these types of student attitudes could positively (or negatively) be influenced. Christofides et al. (2015) examined the effect of parental expectations and peer groups on student grades and aspirations (this included aspirations to attend and complete university). Regression analysis was used to analyze data from The Youth in Transition Survey – Cohort A, a longitudinal survey that captured the responses of learners aged 15-23 (Christofides et al., 2015). Christofides et al. (2015) contended that having strong aspirations during high school toward a post-secondary education not only acts as a motivator in achieving higher grades, but conversely, achieving higher grades can affect one's aspirations. They further strengthened the link between parental expectations and their child's decision to attend university, noting that the effect differed between male and female students and changed through the ages. For example, it was found that after graduating high school, females continued to be affected by their parents; however, some were shown to have peer effects at the age of 23. Yet, since the ages of the Christofides et al. (2015) study were limited to a maximum age of 23, understanding the possibility of attitudinal shifts in older students (through peers) is an area in need of further exploration.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study as articles included in this meta-synthesis were bounded by a Canadian-only context, and ranged only from years 2014 to 2016. This meant that historical studies on the topic were not captured in this research. Nonetheless, this meta-synthesis of literature has highlighted the scarcity of current studies that address adult soft-skills acquisition, particularly among Canadian undergraduate learners.

Conclusions

Higher education can be seen as a place where students' shape their critical-thinking

skills, as well as their ability to reason and collaborate with others; however, entering into an arena in which these skills are foundational for success could also be viewed as a barrier to persistence if not already developed. Studies spoke to the importance and variability of emotional intelligence among individuals, with one suggesting that educational interventions consider these differences. Although interventions that incorporated reflective components were found to have come the closest to accounting for individual differences, the assessment of these interventions were largely based on participant feedback, and not on actual soft-skill measurements or on the perceptions of others who have interacted directly with participants who perceived a gain in skills. Furthermore, all interventions found as a result of this meta-synthesis targeted graduate students, which is notably a population most likely to have already proven some degree of post-secondary success by making it through their undergraduate pursuits. Importance should also be placed on addressing the undergraduate population, specifically those transitioning into post-secondary life, since they have already been shown to be at the highest risk for early departure from their studies (Finnie & Qiu, 2009; Grayson & Grayson, 2003).

A reoccurring theme in the discussion of skills development was social interaction, whether between community agencies, faculty members, or peers. Yet, while studies like Gauvreau et al. (2016) found social interactions with faculty members and peers (even though online) to be effective in fostering skills development, it is not specifically known if development was a result of faculty influence, peer-to-peer interactions, a combination of the two, or otherwise. While Christofide et al. (2015) brought to light the influence that peer groups have on aspiration, still missing are the pieces that address the reciprocal effects of peer-mentoring approaches on soft-skills development for first-year undergraduate students, and the impact these mentoring approaches might have on student retention, achievement, and success beyond higher education. Therefore, it is suggested that this be addressed through further research aimed at understanding soft-skills development (with peer-mentoring as its foci) at the early stages of one's undergraduate journey. Understanding the impact of such approaches could prove positive in leveraging existing institutional resources, and critical to ensuring that Canada's knowledge-based economy is developing the necessary skill-set to thrive in the 21st century's increasingly global labour market.

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Hope-Centred Interventions with Unemployed Clients

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of hope-based interventions (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011) used with clients in employment counselling centers who were experiencing low hope. Specifically, five hope-centred interventions were delivered in face-to-face (F2F; n = 27) and online formats (n = 25). All participants completed the Hope-Centred Career Inventory (HCCI; Niles, Yoon, & Amundson, 2011), the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995), the Vocational Identity Scale (VIS; Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), and the Career Engagement Scale (CES; Hirschi, Freund, & Herrmann, 2014) at the start and at the conclusion of the study. The Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009) was used to identify helpful and hindering factors experienced by the participants as well as factors to consider when delivering the study interventions in the future. Finally, a focus group was used to explore the study participants' perspectives of the career development counsellors who participated in delivering the study. Results indicate that increasing hope competencies can increase an overall sense of hope and that this increase has a direct and measurable effect on how individuals perceive their career situation. The F2F and online groups experienced similar outcomes.

Keywords: hope-centred career interventions, Hope-Centred Career Inventory, career interventions, action-oriented hope, hope-centred interventions with unemployed clients

The experience of unemployment goes beyond finances and impacts the emotions, thought patterns, identity status, self-esteem, relationships, time structure, physical well-being, and life purpose of those who are unemployed (Blustein, Kozan, & Connors-Kellgren, 2013; Borgen & Amundson, 1994; Jahoda, 1982; Paul & Moser, 2009). How individuals experience unemployment shifts over time creating what Borgen and Amundson (1987) describe as an emotional roller coaster effect. Thus, coping with unemployment presents significant challenges and many who experience these challenges lose hope for achieving positive outcomes in the job search process.

Hope-centered competencies provide a useful framework for coping with unemployment and maintaining hope (Niles, Amundson, & Yoon, 2011). More specifically, Niles, Amundson and Yoon constructed an Action-Oriented, Hope-Centred Model of Career Development (HCMCD) that describes competencies that guide the career development process, increase hope, and foster the motivation to take positive steps in the career planning process. These competencies can be measured through the Hope-Centred Career Inventory (Niles, Yoon, & Amundson, 2010). Understanding an individuals' competencies and growth areas provides insight to career practitioners regarding how they can best support their clients as they cope with unemployment.

The Hope-Centred Career Development model integrates Bandura's (2001) human agency theory, Hall's (1996) metacompetencies and protean career theory, and Snyder's (2002) emphasis on hope. To illustrate this integration the HCMCD uses the metaphor of a pinwheel where *action-oriented hope* is at the centre. The focus on *action-oriented hope* involves "envisioning a meaningful goal and believing that positive outcomes are likely to occur

should specific actions be taken" (Niles, Yoon, Balin, & Amundson, 2010, p. 102). Whatever the situation, people with high levels of action-oriented hope are better able to consider positive possibilities, initiate action, and overcome adversity (Niles, In, & Amundson, 2014). The other components of the model are as follows:

- Self-Reflection involves developing understanding as to how one's experiences inform career awareness and self-understanding.
- Self-Clarity involves identifying one's key values, interests, skills and personal style;
- Visioning is defined as engaging in the consideration of positive career possibilities and future outcomes;
- Goal Setting and Planning require developing strategies for accomplishing short and long-term goals;
- Implementing and Adapting involve taking action toward goal achievement and making adjustments as necessary when new self and career information is acquired.
- Environmental and contextual influences can support or hinder positive career development.
- The HCMCD uses Hope as the cornerstone for connecting self-awareness, work awareness, goal-setting, action planning, and adaptability (Niles, In, & Amundson, 2014).

Using the above-mentioned components, the HCMCD provides a broad framework for employment service delivery. The work of Amundson (2009) and Niles, Amundson, and Neault (2011) details a wide variety of career intervention methods. These interventions have many different purposes and can be connected to various components of the HCMCD. Research by Clarke, Amundson, Niles, and Yoon (in press) illustrates the effectiveness of interventions such as *Walking the Problem*-where clients walk towards their desired goals and then look back to where they have come from (self-reflection, visioning, and goal setting); the Circle of Strength – now called *Story Wheels* -which encourages people to use storytelling to identify their strengths and assets (self-clarity); and *Career Flow* (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2010)-where people use the image of water pathways to understand career development (self-reflection and visioning). This earlier research also pointed to the effectiveness of the Hope-Centred Career Inventory (Niles, Yoon, & Amundson, 2010) as both an assessment measure and a tool for overviewing the entire career development process. The Clarke et al. (in press) study illustrates the importance of having facilitators engage clients in ways that help clients feel that they are significant and that they matter. A positive mattering climate sets the stage for intervention strategies to have an impact (Amundson, 1993; Schlossberg, 1989).

For this current study we used the three interventions described above and integrated two additional interventions (Amundson, 2009). The *Two and Three Chair Problem Solving* exercise encourages people to sit in chairs that represent various career options as well as the perspective of the counsellor (goal setting and problem solving). *Staying Afloat* is an activity that uses storytelling and references times when people managed to successfully overcome challenging situations (self-clarity).

Critical to the design and flow of both the face-to-face and online interventions used in the current study was intentional focus on creating conditions and practices that support the development and continued experience of a mattering climate for the participants. In addition, our earlier work had utilized face-to-face (F2F) delivery methods and for this study we wanted to explore if we could achieve similar results with a parallel set of online career delivery intervention strategies.

The purpose of this study is to understand the effectiveness of F2F as well as online interventions utilizing HCMCD in public employment centres. Previous studies including Clark et al. (in press) used F2F interventions only. The effect of online interventions has not been explored among career interventions that used HCMCD. We formed the following research questions to understand the general impact of both delivery channels and the differences between the two:

- To what extent do the mean scores of hope-centered

competencies, general self-efficacy, vocational identify, and career engagement differ comparing between preand post-test results in online and F2F groups, respectively?

- To what extent do the two groups differ in terms of their post-test scores in hopecentred career competencies, general self-efficacy, vocational identity, and career engagement, controlling for the pre-test scores?
- Is there a difference in a perceived level of support offered by the facilitators between the online and F2F groups?
- To what extent do participants' answers differ within each group in terms of their perceptions on how they were doing before and after the interventions?
- What are the helping factors, hindering factors, and wish-list items of the participants in both groups?

Method

Process

This research study involved a number of stages: the design and development of the interventions, the training of practitioners, field delivery, on-going support and monitoring of the interventions and qualitative and quantitative assessment of the interventions and client experience. The interventions we used in the study were wide ranging and incorporated the various competencies comprising the Hope-Centred model. The interventions also were flexible, innovative, and dynamic, which is consistent with the principles of active engagement as outlined by Amundson (2003). Once specific interventions were selected for the project, we developed online intervention methods that paralleled the intention of the F2F interventions. To complete this task, considerable time was spent discussing and analyzing each of the F2F interventions to determine the key components. The principles behind the online design came from one of the researcher's past experiences designing and delivering online career interventions and was guided by an interactive design that considered key three design factors:

1. Information that was relevant and targeted
2. Self-application activities that assisted users in understanding the information provided; and
3. An integration of practitioner input to support meaning-making, prioritisation, and action taking (Bimrose, Kettunen, & Goddard, 2015)

It was important to identify the core essence of the intervention and evaluate how this could be conveyed using online spaces and communication tools that support distributed delivery. For example, the *Walking the Problem* exercise in F2F delivery requires, quite literally for participants to walk across a room as a physical, creative and metaphoric strategy to look at a problem from a new perspective. To convey the essence of this experience in the online delivery we created a short video where participants are guided through a wilderness scene walking from the bottom of a hill in the forest to the top. At the bottom of the hill participants are guided to focus on a problem, and at the top the solution has been realized and they are looking back at the pathway that they took to get there. Thus, we used a visualization rather than having people physically walk across a room to achieve the essential goal of the intervention. A guiding principle of the online design was ensuring that the online interventions offered the same creativity, engagement, and mattering climate as the F2F interventions.

Once the F2F interventions and online activities were in place we selected a group of facilitators for the project and provided them with in-depth training so that they would be prepared to deliver the appropriate interventions. This training focused on the importance of establishing a mattering climate and the steps necessary to deliver the interventions in a timely manner. The trainers all had considerable experience in delivering employment services. Facilitators were assigned to one delivery modality to allow them to focus their practice and the facilitators regularly met together over the project to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Participants

The clients involved in the study came from two employment centers, one in a metropolitan suburb and the other in a smaller community with a very diverse client population. An attempt was made to recruit clients who had relatively low levels of hope according to the HCCI assessment. In the end, 27 clients received the face-to-face interventions (two sessions – each session lasting about 2 hours) and 25 clients participated in an online experience over a 2week period.

Treatment

The F2F intervention process started with a two hour session where clients debriefed the results of the HCCI, were introduced to the Career Flow metaphor, and completed a Story Wheel activity. For the second meeting clients (two hours) did Walking the Problem, Two and Three Chair Problem Solving, and Staying Afloat. They also completed the post intervention HCCI.

The online program took place over a two week period (three to four hours of contact) and included readings, a video, interactive activities, and elaborated learning through threaded online conversations between the client and practitioner. For one intervention there was a phone call and the use of a shared whiteboard in a web conference format. Most of the online delivery was a-synchronous, which allowed participants to log in and work on interventions at a time that was suitable to their lives. Practitioners would send comments and feedback that clients would read the next time they logged in.

Measures

We used a series of measures to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 along with demographic questions. The measures include the HCCI (Niles, Yoon, & Amundson, 2010), the General Self Efficacy Scale (GES; Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995), the Vocational Identity (VI) Scale (Holland, Daiger & Power, 1981), and the Career Engagement Scale (CES; Hirschi, Freund & Herrmann, 2014). Chronbach's alphas of the scales with the dataset were .93 for HCCI Total scale, .87 for *hope*, .54 for *self-reflection*, .80 for *self-clarity*, .83 for *visioning,* .78 for *implementing*, .82 for *goal setting and planning*, .79 for *adapting,* all of which are the subscales of HCCI; 92 for GSE; .89 for VI; .93 for CES. These measures were completed as a pre-test and a post-test. In addition, the Ways of Mattering (WoM) Scale (Corbiere & Amundson, 2007) was given after the interventions to compare 'mattering levels' for F2F and online sessions. Chronbach's alpha for WoM was .63.

In order to answer Research Questions 4 and 5, qualitative interviews with 20 participants (10 F2F and 10 online) were also used after the intervention period using a method called the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio & Amundson, 2009). With this in-depth, semi-structured interviewing approach clients are asked to identify specific helpful and hindering incidents. As probes for this discussion they were asked to describe their thoughts, feelings, and actions. The following questions were posed to the participants: What exactly made it helpful or hindering? What went on before or after? How did it turn out? In addition to these questions, they were asked to describe what they would have liked to have had happen (the wish list). To understand participants' answers more clearly, we also added a separate question at the end of the interview asking clients to use a 10 point Likert scale (0 = *doing poorly*, 5 = *being OK* and 10 = *doing really well*) to assess pre and post-test score differences.

Results

Although it was our intention to have two similar groups for comparison purposes, the groups turned out to be somewhat different from one another. The number of males for the F2F group was 35.7% and for online this number dropped to 25%. In terms of racial identity, the F2F group had more people (85.7%) identifying as Caucasian as compared to the online group (70.8%). However, when one looks at immigrant status, the online group was larger with

29.2% as compared to 17.9% for those receiving F2F intervention. The F2F group had 39.3% of the people who were unemployed for more than two years, and the online group had 20.8% in this category. These differences need to be carefully considered when making comparisons between the two groups.

The Effects of the Interventions: Within-Group Difference (RQ 1)

Paired t-tests were performed with pre and post-test results (N = 52) for the Hope-Centred Career Inventory (HCCI; Niles, Yoon, & Amundson, 2010) and its subscales—*hope, selfreflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing, and adapting*; the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995); Vocational Identity Scale (VI; Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980); and the Career Engagement Scale (CES; Hirschi, Freund, & Herrmann, 2014) for both groups—face-to-face (n =28) and online (n = 24).

Taking both delivery methods into consideration (N = 52), there were statistically significant improvements in all measures, t (51) scores ranged from -8.09 to -.3.76, p = .000 with no exception. Looking at the effect size using Hedges' g, it ranged from .48 to 1.10. Considering Cohen's (1988) guidelines—.80 = high, .05 = medium, and 0.20 = small—the effect of the intervention can be interpreted to be medium to high. The highest impact was in participants' HCCI Total Scale (1.10), and the lowest was with *adapting*.

As for the F2F group, GSE, HCCI Total Scale, *hope, implementing*, VI, and CES showed statistically significant differences in mean scores between two times at .001 level (see Table 1). *Self-clarity, visioning, and goal-setting* and planning mean scores between the two times improved after the intervention at .01 level. The *adapting* score showed an improvement at .05 level, while there was no statistically significant different in the *self-reflection* scale (M2-M1 = .2, p = .76). T (27) scores ranged from -5.34 to -1.85. Hedge's g scores ranged from .37 to .95, indicating moderate to high impact.

As for the online group, all measures showed statistically significant improvements at .001 level, except for CES (p = .002) and *adapting* (p = .014) (see Table 2). T-values ranged from -6.40 to -2.67. Hedges' g scores ranged from .67 (adapting) to 1.48 (HCCI Total), indicating medium to very high impact.

Between Group Differences (RQ 2 & 3)

To answer Research Question 2, we used Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for the pre-test scores of the two groups. The first step was to check whether the pre-test scores of both groups are not statistically different. All measures except for CES turned out to be no different. The second step was to check the homogene-

Table 1

Effects of the Face-to-Face Intervention

	Mean Scores					
Scale	Pre (A) (n = 28)	Post (B) (n = 28)	r	t	df	*Hedges's g*
HCCI Total	2.72 (.29)	3.10 (.50)	.49	4.72***	27	.90
Hope	2.42 (.69)	3.01 (.80)	.53	4.27***	27	.77
Self-reflection	3.14 (.51)	3.34 (.52)	.40	1.85	27	.37
Self-clarity	2.82 (.57)	3.21 (.56)	.45	3.49**	27	.67
Visioning	2.63 (.66)	2.96 (.72)	.63	3.02**	27	.46
Goal-setting and planning	2.34 (.52)	2.96 (.72)	.41	3.30**	27	.95
Implementing	2.46 (.59)	3.01 (.63)	.45	4.46***	27	.87
Adapting	3.21 (.54)	3.43 (.58)	.67	2.61*	27	.38
Vocational Identity	5.21 (3.80)	7.86 (4.55)	.65	3.93**	27	.61
General Self-Efficacy	2.67 (.56)	3.05 (.59)	.79	5.33***	27	.64
Career Engagement Scale	2.27 (.89)	3.11 (1.08)	.40	4.05***	27	.83

Note. * = p <.05, ** = p <.01, *** = p <.001. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means

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Table 2

Effects of the Online Intervention

Scale	Mean Scores Pre (A) (n = 24)	Mean Scores Post (B) (n = 24)	r	t	df	*Hedges' g*
HCCI Total	2.88 (.35)	3.43 (.37)	.31	6.26***	23	1.48
Hope	2.65 (.61)	3.26 (.74)	.57	4.72***	23	.87
Self-reflection	3.13 (.45)	3.53 (.44)	.52	4.58***	23	.87
Self-clarity	2.95 (.68)	3.59 (.47)	.70	6.40***	23	1.06
Visioning	2.83 (.53)	3.42 (.55)	.24	4.32***	23	1.06
Goal-setting and planning	2.50 (.49)	3.20 (.52)	.07	4.94***	23	1.34
Implementing	2.68 (.62)	3.28 (.32)	.39	5.14***	23	1.18
Adapting	3.42 (.45)	3.70 (.35)	.18	2.66*	23	.67
Vocational Identity	6.50 (5.29)	11.46 (4.85)	.31	5.22***	23	.95
General Self-Efficacy	2.86 (.57)	3.40 (.58)	.72	6.21***	23	.91
Career Engagement Scale	3.30 (.81)	3.86 (.68)	.45	3.49***	23	.72

Note. * = p <.05, ** = p <.01, *** = p <.001. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means

ity of regression assumption. All measures passed the assumption. Therefore, we proceeded to run ANCOVA for all measures except for CES. There was a significant effect of the modality type on *self-clarity*, F(1, 49) = 6.77, p = .012); *visioning*, F(1, 49) = 4.62, p = .037); *goal setting and planning*, F(1, 49) = 5.11, p = .028); VI, F(1, 49) = 6.97, p = .011), after controlling for the pre-test results (see Table 3). Looking at the effect size—partial eta squared—the group membership accounts for 12.1% of the variance in *self-clarity*, 8.5% in *visioning*, 9.4% in *goal setting and planning*, and 12.5% in vocational identity scores.

The Ways of Mattering Scale (WoM; Corbière & Amundson, 2007) was administered to everyone after the intervention to answer Research Question 3. The maximum score of WoM is five. To see the difference in facilitators' effectiveness perceived by the participants between the two groups, independent t-test was performed (F2F Group: M = 4.70, SD = .21; Online Group: M = 4.60, SD = .30). Although there was a difference of .1 in the mean scores, t-test results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in WoM, indicating that the facilitators in the two groups were equally effective in supporting the participants.

Within Group Differences in How They Were Doing (RQ 4)

As an additional assessment measure, we added an extra question to the 20 ECIT qualitative interviews that we conducted. Our question focused on how they were doing before the start of the interventions and how they were doing now that they had gone through this process. The participants were asked to provide their answers using a 10-point Likert scale (0 = *doing poorly*, 5 = *being OK* and 10 = *doing really well*). What stands out is the fact that for 19 of the 20 participants interviewed, there was movement in a positive direction. The one outlier was a person who somehow entered the program with the expectation that the focus of the intervention was active job search; thus the program did not meet their anticipated and immediate needs. This speaks to the need to ensure that people entering the program are aware of the program goals.

In looking at the results of this additional assessment measure with ten F2F participants there was an average gain of 4.75 points. For the online participants the overall gain was 3.35 points. Based on this information we decided to do a statistical analysis of our findings. There was a statistically significant improvement with strong effect sizes for both interventions. A paired t-test was conducted for each of the groups. For the F2F group, Mean 2 (after the intervention) was statistically significantly higher (M = 6.95, SD = 1.74) than Mean 1 (before

Table 3

The Effects of the Interventions on HCCI, VI, and CES at Time 2

	Estimated Marginal Means at T2				
Scale	F2F (n = 28)	Online (n = 24)	F	p	η^2_p
HCCI Total	3.145 (.079)	3.377 (.085)	3.889	.054	.074
Hope	3.076 (.125)	3.182 (.135)	.323	.573	.007
Self-reflection	3.336 (.083)	3.536 (.089)	2.700	.107	.052
Self-clarity	3.241 (.084)	3.562 (.090)	6.774*	.012	.121
Visioning	3.015 (.107)	3.357 (.116)	4.623*	.037	.086
Goal-setting and planning	2.785 (.114)	3.168 (.124)	5.106*	.028	.094
Implementing	3.043 (.090)	3.242 (.098)	2.196	.145	.043
Adapting	3.478 (.080)	3.640 (.087)	1.843	.181	.036
Vocational Identity	8.228 (.716)	11.025 (.774)	6.969*	.011	.125
Career Engagement Scale	3.115 (.073)	3.324 (.079)	1.225	.274	.024

Note. * = p <.05, ** = p <.01, *** = p <.001. Standard Errors appear in parentheses below means.

the intervention) (M = 2.20, SD = 1.77), t(9) = -8.58, p = .000, 95% CI [3.50, 6.00], Hedges' g = 2.48. The CL effect size indicates that after controlling for individual differences, the likelihood that a person scores higher for Mean 2 than for Mean 1 is 99.67%. For the online group, Mean 2 (after the intervention) was statistically significantly higher (M = 7.65, SD = 1.32) than Mean 1 (before the intervention) (M = 4.25, SD = 1.59), t(9) = -3.79, p = .000, 95% CI [1.37, 5.43], Hedges' g = 1.87. The CL effect size indicates that after controlling for individual differences, the likelihood that a person scores higher for Mean 2 than for Mean 1 is 88.47%.

Helping Factors, Hindering Factors, and Wish-list Items (RQ 5)

In the previous section, we highlighted the overall positive impact of these interventions from a quantitative perspective. To better understand the factors that contributed to this impact, we interviewed 20 participants (10 F2F and 10 Online) and asked them to describe the helpful and hindering factors as well as their wish-list items. The results we obtained from the interviews help us to understand why the interventions were so successful. We also conducted a focus group with the facilitators to assess their perspective on offering these interventions.

Helpful factors. The following are identified to be helping factors:

1. *Positive / Productive Working Relationship with the Facilitator* – This category includes a wide range of positive comments about the qualities of the facilitator – clarity of instruction, respectful, caring, encouraging, open and honest, intelligent, useful feedback, flexible, creating a safe place for sharing, pushing people to think deeper, and clarity of instruction.
   - 62 incidents by 20 people (100%)
   - F2F / 32 incidents by 10 people (100%)
   - Online / 30 incidents by 10 people (100%)
2. *Metaphoric Reflection / Resonance* – This category focuses on some of the images that were useful in the counselling process – water images (career flow); staying afloat; and the Circle of Strengths
   - 40 incidents by 17 people (85%)
   - F2F / 24 incidents by 10 people (100 %)
   - Online / 16 incidents by 7 people (70%)
3. *New Perspectives on Job Search, Career Planning & Decision Making* – This category emphasizes being energized to do job search in a more positive manner. As part of this people see the bigger picture and

are more open to change, they focus on more than just problems. In an online space there is a written record of what they have done and can use this later for job search.

- 22 incidents by 14 people (70%)
- F2F / 13 incidents by 6 people (60%)
- Online / 9 incidents by 8 people (80%)

4. *Positive Reframing* – In this category there is a focus on better self awareness of strengths and how this process can be useful in overcoming challenges and problems.

- 21 incidents by 13 people (65%)
- F2F / 10 incidents by 7 people (70%)
- Online / 11 incidents by 6 people (60%)

5. *Physical Movement / Active Learning* - The focus in this category is on how useful it was to engage in active learning activities like Walking the Problem and the Two / Three Chair strategy.

- 13 incidents by 12 people (60%)
- F2F / 9 incidents by 8 people (80%)
- Online / 4 incidents by 4 people (40%)

6. *Deeper Reflection* - In this category there is an awareness on how the counselling activities encourage deeper thinking about one self. Examples include value of open ended questions and choosing to put significant time into activities for personal learning. With online clients, being able to write down some of their thoughts was also very helpful and encouraged deeper and ongoing reflection.

- 15 incidents by 8 people (40%)
- F2F / 5 incidents by 3 people (30%)
- Online / 10 incidents by 5 people (50%)

7. *Flexible Work Time and Space* – This category recognizes that the online interventions offered unique flexibility in choosing a time and place for completing the activities. It enabled some to think and process their thoughts before sharing.

- 8 incidents by 6 people (60%)
- F2F / 0 incidents by 0 people (0%)
- Online / 8 incidents by 6 people (60%)

8. *Efficient and Effective Program Design* – This category addresses how the design and flow of the interventions impact the experience.

- 10 incidents by 7 people (35%)
- F2F / 1 incident by 1 person (10%)
- Online / 9 incidents by 6 people (60%)

9. *Normalized Experience* – This category reflects an awareness that others are going through the same situation,

- 4 incidents by 3 people (15%)
- F2F / 2 incidents by 2 people (20%)
- Online / 2 incidents by 1 person (10%)

10. *HCCI as a Baseline for Change* – In this category there is recognition that the HCCI results can be used as a baseline for looking at future change.

- 2 incidents by 2 people (10%)
- F2F / 0 incidents by 0 people (0%)
- Online / 2 incidents by 2 people (20%)

11. *Other*

- 3 incidents by 3 people (15%)
- F2F / 2 incidents by 2 people (20%)
- Online / 1 incident by 1 person (10%)

We also asked participants to describe those incidents that were unhelpful, and it was interesting to note that seven of the people could not list anything that was negative. From those that did respond, below are the results:

Hindering factors. The following are identified to be hindering factors:

1. *Unable to Relate to Metaphors and Content of Online Program* - too academic (20%)
2. *Post-test Questions* - ambiguous, confusing, too many questions (20%)
3. *Personal Difficulties* - getting

to the center on the bus; forgetting glasses; and kids were a distraction at home (15%)
4. *Technological Problems* - downloading was a problem; navigating the computer (15%)
5. *HCCI Questions* - ambiguous; hard to do on the computer; difficult to answer (15%)
6. *Lack of Personal Connection* - impersonal nature of being online (15%)
7. *Lack of Connection Between Activities and Getting a Job* - too much focus on reflection (10%)
8. *Time Pressures* (10%)
9. *Lack of Introductory Knowledge* - expectations about what was going to happen (5%)

Wish list. Finally, participants were asked to describe what they would have like to have happen. The F2F intervention participants answered that they wish they:

- Had a copy of the Circle of Strengths diagram (2 persons);
- Had more sessions and more time in sessions for activities;
- Had a better (more private) space for sessions;
- Had an opportunity to hear from others about their experiences;
- Had an opportunity to write things down;
- Had people come up with their own personal examples with the career flow activity;
- Perceived more direction on how to meet goals;
- Received a bus pass
- Had colored pens for the drawing activity; and
- Did a paper version of the HCCI (not on the computer).
- Online participants answered that they wish they:
- Were allowed to download the entire process for future review (2 persons);
- Had F2F or Skype contact with the facilitator before beginning the process (2 persons);
- Had more contact with the facilitator (particularly for the final three modules);
- Have ongoing contact with the facilitator after the program ends;
- Participate in longer program;
- Had a more streamlined program delivery;
- Received clearer expectations at the beginning;
- Acquired more practical tools for finding work;
- Had additional topics such as the immigrant experience;
- Had more time to explore and assess training options;
- Were notified that if you contact the facilitator by phone then you have to pay for the phone call;
- Had more summary points – bringing information forward along the way; and
- Found ways to connect with others during and after the program

Facilitator focus group themes. To better understand what was happening in the intervention sessions we also explored the experience of the facilitators that were delivering the interventions. A focus group discussion was held at the end of the project and here are some of the themes that emerged:

- Amazed by the impact of this set of interventions in such a short period of time;
- It is important to approach clients in a different way to build trust—to start by listening to their stories;
- It is important to be aware of the uniqueness of each person;
- You have to be ready to be flexible in dealing with each client, great to be able to choose the order of the various activities and also to have the freedom to adapt the delivery mode;
- The Circle of Strength activity was so powerful—giving people strength based feedback;
- Surprised by how fast you could establish a trusting relationship;
- You don't always have to solve problems, just be there for the person and let them tell their story;
- Through this process they were learning to be genuine and trust themselves more in dealing with people, not so reliant on formal structures;
- Appreciated how powerful the online space can be in facilitating the telling of the story;
- Learned to allow clients to express emotion without feeling that they had to try and fix the problem;
- Surprised that the Walking

the Problem exercise was workable even in a small space and online; and
- You cannot always predict what a client is going to get out of an activity, there is a certain unpredictability to the process

Discussion

In reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data the significant gains that were made in a relatively short period of time is a key theme. A strong client / counsellor relationship was established (a mattering relationship) for both F2F and online groups and upon this foundation clients actively engaged in the intervention activities and realized significant gains in their level of hope and their understanding of themselves and the labour market. The results reinforce the importance of hope as a central factor in the career development process. Clients increased their level of self-understanding and were better able to visualize and construct viable plans for action. These implementation actions incorporated both personal agency and flexibility. The changes that were observed in this study run parallel to the earlier research findings with internationally trained health professionals (Clarke, Amundson, Niles, & Yoon, in press). As an illustration of the impact that was realized can be heard in the following participants' comments.

> It definitely helped! It was supportive. You get a lot of pressure when you are unemployed. You're not seen as worthwhile in society unless you're working. So to be supported enough to step back and think about what you want to do and where your strengths are and what you can do better – this helps because it makes you think about the things that are important to you.

> In going to job interviews, I felt more relaxed. I think the interviewers sensed that, and I even offered my services as a volunteer. Anyways, they hired me, which was great….But the job is only part time, and I still need to find another job. Being part of this research was really helpful.

> I would recommend the program to anyone. It was especially good for people like me who have been unemployed for a couple of years. Obviously, if you've been unemployed that long basically you need something to focus you and something like this might help

These comments (and others) highlight how hope plays a key role in setting the stage for effective career action.

This study afforded an opportunity to compare F2F and online delivery methods. The quantitative results support the efficacy of both methods with perhaps a slightly stronger performance by the online approach. One needs to be careful in making this interpretation, however, in view of the fact that pre-test scores for the Career Engagement Scale were significantly lower for the F2F group. This difference in the starting point could well have influenced the results.

The recruitment process allowed the facilitator and participant to select online or F2F delivery. This recruitment decision was made because in operational service delivery contexts, additional considerations were necessary. For example, to succeed in the online environment clients needed access to a computer (although a number of Clients used computers at the employment centre to participate), basic computer skills and sufficient reading and writing skills. There was no obvious demographic trend in age for participating online. There was a larger group of immigrants in the online delivery at nearly double F2F; while the face-to-face group had a larger percentage of participants with over two years of unemployment, also nearly double that of the online group. Although it was not in the scope of the study to analyze these characteristics, they may offer suggestions for further research looking at F2F and online delivery.

A close examination of the qualitative interview results indicates a great deal of common experience between the F2F and online counselling groups. Participants from both groups emphasized the importance of having

quality counselling relationships, customization of service delivery, and powerful intervention methods utilizing creative and metaphoric activities. In particular, the Circle of Strength and the water images from the Career Flow activity were described as being meaningful and accessible. It was evident that this active, creative and dynamic learning approach was appreciated, and recognized by participants and facilitators as a factor to the learning success in both modalities. It is also important to acknowledge some of the unique strengths associated with each mode of delivery. Online counselling can provide more flexibility and time for deeper reflection by clients and counsellors. Face-to-face counselling, on the other hand, provides direct access to the counsellor and that can be particularly helpful. Through our analysis we realized that the face-to-face and online approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses, and need to be understood in that light. Rather than framing the issue in terms of what works best, perhaps there are ways for a new integrated or blended model to emerge (Richards & Simpson, 2015). This certainly is a direction that we would like to pursue in further research.

Given the positive results from this study, it would seem straightforward to suggest that these methods be directly incorporated into current employment service delivery. While this is a laudable goal, there also might be some complexities that need to be taken into account. The practitioners who delivered the online and F2F interventions suggested that their involvement in this process was different from what they normally experienced in their everyday worklife. For example, they noted that the activities provided to clients in this study were more creative than those they typically provide and there was greater flexibility in service delivery and a heavier emphasis on listening and ensuring a mattering climate during the study than what the practitioners typically emphasize in their work outside the study. These contextual factors would need to be addressed if this approach was adopted at a broader level. There also was some additional training that was required, and this would need to be taken into account.

The current study has certainly pointed to some potential pathways for more efficient and effective career services. To make this a reality, however, additional work will need to be done to ensure that contextual variables are also addressed as part of the delivery package.

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Graduate Student Research Briefs

The Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the Practice of Quebec Career Guidance Counsellors?

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Abstract

This research presents the results of two surveys carried out in 2015 and 2016 among Québec career counsellors on the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into their practice. We will present results of the use of ICTs in interventions, namely: the purposes for which ICTs are used in practice; the level of confidence to use the Internet, to conduct interviews at distance; and incentives to integrate ICTs into its practice. It turns out that while ICTs have been in the career guidance profession for more than 40 years (Watts, 2002), their uses are often limited to disseminating and transmitting information.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been part of the practice of career guidance counsellors for more than forty years (Watts, 2002). Since the arrival of the Internet, the possibilities of offering various forms of provision of distance educational and vocational guidance have multiplied (Sampson and Makela, 2014; Savard, Gingras and Turcotte, 2002; Watts and Dent, 2006). Despite the presence of ICTs in career guidance practices, their use are largely limited to managing and communicating information, offering clients engaged in self-directed guidance processes some support and administering tests (Bimrose, Kettunen and Goddard, 2015; Bimrose, Hughes and Barnes, 2011). Few guidance counsellors offer counselling services at distance, yet one of the first motivations for using ICTs is to reach populations who would otherwise not request career counselling services (Backhaus, A., Agha, Z. Maglione, M, Repp, A., Ross, B., Zuest, …,Thorp, 2012; Mallen, Jenkins, Vogel and Day, 2011). The fact that a growing proportion of the population uses and integrates ICTs in their daily activities also puts pressure on the integration of ICTs in the provision of career guidance services (Bimrose et al., 2015; Hooley, Hutchinson and Watts, 2010).

Research has been increasing over the last fifteen years and some observations have emerged on the questions of effectiveness, ethical dimensions and modalities of intervention. What we know about these questions comes largely from researches related to the field of personal counselling and psychotherapy. The findings of distance interventions show that the majority of interventions are provided via email exchanges or asynchronous or synchronous chat sessions (Barak, Hen, Meyran and Shapiro, 2008; Richards and Vigano, 2013); that few online counselling is done through the use of videoconferencing (Barak et al., 2008; Kraus, 2011). In addition, these interventions are usually of short duration (Barak et al., 2008; Kraus, 2011) and are not well integrated into the initial training of counselling and guidance specialists (Anthony, 2015; Kraus, 2011; Richards and Vigano, 2013). These remote interventions can respond to a variety of challenges related to the field of mental health and human relations, particularly those related to relational dimensions, family, career development, mood

and anxiety disorder (Bimrose et al, 2015; Finn and Barak, 2010; Kraus, 2011). Research also shows that distance counselling practices are as effective as face to face practices (Barak et al., 2008; Kraus, 2011; Richards and Vigano, 2013). It should be noted that these surveys were conducted with personal counselling specialists who already use various modalities of distance intervention. However, counsellors and guidance counsellors questioned their role of integrating the Internet and distance counselling practices in career guidance (Vuorinen, Sampson and Kettunen, 2011). In Canada, very little is known about the intensity and type of use of ICTs by career guidance counsellors in their daily practice. In this paper, we present the main results of two surveys conducted in Québec in 2015 and 2016 with groups of career counsellors.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in both surveys are career guidance counsellors from the province of Quebec in Canada. The first survey was conducted in 2015 (29 counsellors) by the author in collaboration with the College of Quebec Career Counsellors (OCCOQ). Initially, the OCCOQ launched an invitation to participate in this survey to nearly 2,500 Québec career guidance counsellors asking if they were using ICTs other than telephone and e-mail in their practice. 185 counsellors responded positively, and of these, 112 agreed to receive the questionnaire. 29 counsellors completed the questionnaire. The second survey was conducted in 2016 by the CEFRIO and the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec (2016) with the assisatnce of twelve professional orders in the fields of mental health and human relations. 3784 professionals responded including 236 career guidance counsellors. In total, both surveys benefited from the participation of 265 guidance counsellors, 81% of whom were women with an average of 14 years experience. They came from all sectors of guidance practice and the majority of counsellors were working in the public sector. Most of them were employees. Both surveys were conducted using web questionnaires.

Results

The nature and wording of the questions in the two surveys are not identical. We will indicate, if necessary, how these questions could differ and provide the results according to the survey and according to the following themes: use of ICTs in intervention; purposes for which ICTs are used in practice; level of confidence in using the Internet, conducting interviews at a distance; and finally the incentives for the integration of ICTs in its practice.

Use of ICTs in Intervention

In both surveys, guidance counsellors indicate that the telephone (51% for 2015 and 38% for 2016) and e-mail (respectively 48% for 2015 and 40% for 2016) are “often or very often “ used to intervene with their clients, but also social networks (82%) as evidenced by the results of the survey of 2016. Very little use is made of videoconferencing and Web conferencing; the two surveys reported a use “often or very often used” in a proportion of only 6%.

Purposes of the use of ICTs in its practice

Both surveys included questions about the purposes for which the professional was using ICT.

Overall, the results presented in Table 1 show that ICTs are mainly used to search for and disseminate information, make appointments or follow-up with clients and, increasingly, according to the survey of 2016, for the keeping of records; from time to time to administer tests, get training; and finally, very rarely to conduct career guidance interviews at distance.

Here are two comments from the 2015 survey that illustrate the mindset in which counsellors see the use of ICTs in their practice:

> “... it is mainly for educational and professional information via email or telephone, distance education and testing that I use ICTs ...”

"... I encourage my clients to use these technologies for targeted information searches and to answer questionnaires. We take over this information during the face to face interviews ... "

Level of confidence to use the Internet, to conduct interviews at distance

The 2016 survey asked counsellors to assess their ability to use the Internet. The counsellors gave themselves a high average to self-efficacy to use Internet, a score of 8.7 out of 10, particularly to find the information that they search for (9.0 out of 10). In the 2015 survey, using part of questionnaire developed by Glasheen, Campbell and Shochet (2013), a section was devoted to measure self-confidence in conducting distance interviews. Counsellors showed a moderately high level of confidence in conducting interviews at a distance. They self-rated "high to very high" at 55% for technical skills, 65% for understanding the legal consequences, 45% for keeping control of the interview, and 65% to ensure confidentiality.

Incentives for integrating ICTs into its practice

On what guidelines do consultants refer to use ICTs? In the 2016 survey, 83% of respondents answered "yes" that they relied on the guidelines provided by their professional order, and "yes" at 55% from the guidelines provided by their employer.

In the 2015 survey, the question "How did you learn to conduct interviews at distance? " counsellors reported that it was through informal means that they were trained, in a proportion of 45% by peers, 27% by trial and error and 27% by personal readings. In the 2016 survey, few questions were asked on their perception of being sufficiently informed about digital issues: respondents answered "yes" to: 74% to secure access to digital devices; 47% to ensure confidentiality in the transmission of information; 50% to know how to ensure data protection. When asked in the 2016 survey, "What could help you to integrate more ICTs," they say "yes" to 73% that they expect to receive clear guidelines from their order, and to 58% if there was an increased offer of training on technical aspects of ICTs integration, and "yes" to 51% if this offer relates to standards and regulations. In the 2016 survey, counsellors responded "yes" to 41% that if they were seeing increased demand from their clients, this could be an incentive to integrate more ICTs into their practice.

Discussion

The objective of this article was to present the results of two surveys conducted in 2015 and 2016 with career guidance counsellors in Quebec, Canada on the use of ICTs in their practice. There are limitations to this study, particularly the size of survey samples and the fact that the questions were not asked in exactly the same way from one survey to another. The analysis of the results shows however that from one survey to another, similar and complementary findings seem to emerge.

The results indicate that the counsellors who participat-

Table 1

For what purposes are ICTs is "often or very often used"?

Purpose	Survey 2015 (n=29)	Survey 2016 (n=236)
Find / disseminate information	66%	53%
Appointment / follow-up	58%	37%
Test administration	31%	
Training	21%	
Record keeping	28%	59%
Career guidance interview	3%	

ed in these studies are already comfortable using the Internet as evidenced by the high scores obtained on the level of self-efficacy in using the Internet in 2016. The fact that participants in the two surveys were recruited via the Web, could be an element of explanation. A larger sample, drawn from lists of members of different associations of counsellors and guidance counsellors, may have revealed a greater disparity in the averages obtained on this scale. Three types of technologies stand out from the rest in terms of the use of ICTs in intervention: telephone, e-mail and the Internet, especially via social networks such as Facebook. The averages obtained on these technologies suggest that they are generally integrated into the practice of career guidance counsellors.

It should also be noted that some of the aims for intervention appear to more than others likely involve the use of ICTs, in particular those related to: accessing and disseminating information, making appointments or follow-up with clients, record keeping; a little less to administer tests, to be trained; and finally, rarely to accompany clients at distance. These results are substantially similar to those of the studies conducted by Bimrose et al. (2011) and Hooley et al. (2010) which indicated that guidance counsellors used ICTs primarily to communicate and transmit information to their clients. Participants in our study do not seem to make wider use of ICTs in their practice. The results, on the other hand, indicate that if the professional order of guidance counsellors provided clear guidelines for the use of ICTs and offered more training on the technical and ethical aspects of distance career guidance, we could see greater integration of ICTs in professional interventions. Similarly, as Glasheen et al (2013) noted in their study with guidance counsellors in Australia, if these specialists were able to note higher demand from their clients, this may increase the use ICTs into their practice, possibly at the level of conducting distance interviews.

This study found that although ICTs have been an integral part of guidance counsellors' practice for more than 40 years (Watts, 2002), their use is often limited to managing and transmitting educational and vocational information.

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Graduate Student Research Briefs

A Qualitative Exploration of Career Identity Development among "Dependent" Immigrant Women: Preliminary Findings

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Cristelle Audet. University of Ottawa

Acknowledgment

This study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2015) awarded to the first author. The authors intend to submit for future publication a full paper detailing study findings and a proposed model of immigrant women's career identity development.

This research brief is based on a study completed by the first author for her MA thesis. To access the complete thesis, readers are encouraged to visit the following link: https://ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/37223

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to understand the process of career identity development among women immigrants arriving as applicants with dependent status. Past research has shown that most dependent applicants under the economic class of immigrants are women and constitute a group of skilled individuals capable of contributing positively to Canada's economy. However, women arriving to Canada on a dependent visa have largely been ignored within immigrant literature. Exploring their career-related experiences upon immigration may assist in understanding career identity development within pre- and post-migration contexts. A qualitative inquiry, inspired by a grounded theory methodology, was carried out to identify themes relevant to immigrant women's career identity development and their possible interactions. Six study participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. Transcripts of semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant were analyzed using thematic analysis. Eight themes were generated, illuminating gender-specific experiences of women immigrants during their career journey. The findings may provide useful information to career counsellors who play a key role in helping immigrant women navigate through career transitions in a new country.

A gendered pattern of migration exists whereby men migrate to places in search of work and their partners "follow them" (Inglis, 2003; Spitze, 1984). In a Canadian context, the person applying for immigration is referred to as principal applicant and the accompanying spouse is referred to as dependent applicant—eighty percent of which are women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). While women face challenges to furthering their career in a host country due to the intersectionality of race, gender, and immigration (Adsera & Chiswick, 2007), their dependent status adds yet another barrier. Previous research has shown that immigrant women can face poorer employment outcomes, regardless of being highly skilled and having held professional roles in their home countries (Banerjee & Phan, 2015; Purkayastha, 2005). Moreover the family investment hypothesis (Cobb-Clark & Crossley, 2004) and gender-role theory suggest that women, upon migrating, often invest in ways that will maximize the family's overall well-being—such as supporting the spouse who is the designated primary earner, engaging in "survival jobs" to supplement family income, or prioritizing family needs such as childcare—over personal goals (Branden, 2014; Iredale, 2005). The result is "compromised careers" upon migration

(Suto, 2009, p. 421).

Still yet, a negative stereotype seems reflected in labels characterizing dependent applicants as "tied-movers" (Banerjee & Phan, 2015) or "trailing spouses" (Cooke, 2001) that often fails to consider the inner strength and coping resources immigrant women utilize during their career transition (Koert, Borgen, & Amundson, 2011). Likewise, the literature focuses predominantly on the challenges rather than helpful factors in immigrants' career transitions (Vojdanijahromi, 2016). This disparity may cloud a thicker account of immigrant women's career development over time that includes both *what* challenging and facilitating experiences might shape career identity and *how*.

Despite nurturing dreams of pursuing career goals upon migration and holding promise of successful career integration, abrupt disruption of seemingly smooth career trajectories due to migration can lead many women to question their career identity (De Silva, 2010)—a phenomenon that remains under-researched. A primary objective of this qualitative study was to give voice to a marginalized section of the immigrant population by exploring challenging and facilitating experiences of immigrant women with dependent status as they relate to career identity development (CID). For the purpose of this study, we refer to career identity as a "structure of meanings in which the individual links his [sic] own motivation, interests and competencies with acceptable career roles" (Meijers, 1998, p. 191).

Method

While previous researchers have proposed theories to understand the career development concerns of immigrant and refugee population (e.g., Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008), there appears to be no existing conceptual framework to explain the CID of immigrant women. A qualitative lens using a grounded theory inspired methodology was deemed appropriate for this study to better understand how dependent women develop career identity upon immigration. Though the purpose of this methodology was not to generate a theory of CID, it allowed for: (a) a more constructivist approach to forefront the under-represented career-related experiences of immigrant women; (b) unveiling process-oriented responses (Creswell, Hanson, Piano, & Morales, 2007) in terms of *how* career identity may develop in an immigration context; and (c) identifying themes related to immigrant women's CID and possible connections between those themes.

Using purposive and snowball sampling, six female spouses of principal applicants under the economic class of immigrants were recruited for study participation. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Career-related experiences pre- and post-migration were captured for each participant during an audio-recorded semi-structured interview of approximately one hour. Within the grounded theory inspired methodology, data in the form of transcribed interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase method of thematic analysis to generate themes. Trustworthiness efforts included member checks, auditing, reflective journaling, and providing contextual information of the participants and researcher.

Results

While we do not conceptualize CID as a linear process, the eight themes generated appeared sequentially linked and offer a sense of how career identity developed over time in response to migratory demands. Not all themes were reflected in each participant's career experience, as participants described a different career trajectory depending on life stage, education level, and barriers/supports. The eight themes presented in Table 2, along with a representative participant verbatim, illuminate experiences related to CID.

Participants and their family were *on board the Canadian dream* in hopes of experiencing an enhanced quality of life and growth opportunities related to career. In *coming to terms with "dependent" status*, participants responded to the notion of applying as a dependent applicant while immigration efforts were taking hold beyond just an idea. Based on Canada's point system for screening visa applications, participants started reflecting on

Table 1

A Summary of Demographic Information of Participants

					Pre-migration		Post-migration	
Pseudonym	Years in Canada	Age	Country emigrated from	Number of children (age)	Education	Employment (years)	Education	Employment (years)
Yasmin	1.5	25	Bangladesh	NA	Bachelor's degree (Business Administration)	None	In progress	None
Sarah	6	36	United Kingdom	2 (7, 4)	Diploma (Customer Relationship), Diploma (Beauty & Hairstyling)	Billing analyst (6), Worked at pub (part-time), Hairstylist (5)	None	Freelance hairstylist (5), Cleaning services provider (3), Sales associate (5 months)
Chandi	8	40	Ireland	1 (6)	Doctoral degree (International Relations)	Research assistant- USA (1), Policy analyst and researcher (1)	None	Independent researcher (7-8)
Jamie	12	40+	China	2 (--)	Bachelor's degree (Accounting)	Accountant – (4-5), Assistant manager (1)	Diploma (Early Childhood Education)	Early childhood educator (5), Activity animator (1), Chef (6 months)
Swati	13	43	India	2 (15, 12)	Master's degree (English)	Teacher (2), Telemarket associate (7-8 months) Assistant - boutique (2)	Diploma (Early Childhood Education)	Early childhood educator (1.5), Sales associate (3), Home daycare (8)
Aduna	16	50+	France	2 (25, 16)	Diploma (Accounting)	Accountant, (10), Sales associate (8)	Diploma (Early Childhood Education)	Early childhood educator (1), Montessori school (5), Restaurant business (5)

Table 2

Themes and a Representative Participant Verbatim

Theme	Participant Verbatim
On board the Canadian dream	Here [in Canada] you have a chance. [It] doesn't matter where you are from. Doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. Doesn't matter if you are handicap. Doesn't matter you know the colour of your skin. You have a chance…you can work. You can make money. They are not closing the door on your face. (Aduna)[1]
Coming to terms with "dependent" status	The realization that my education hadn't been to the level of my husband's type thing. And there is definitely a realization of…of a little bit of self-worth where that's not quite as you know when you go and fill everything out… you realize that this information is now so important, you know. (Sarah)
Maintaining equilibrium	It was emotionally like a lot of ups and downs because I used to struggle with so many things. I had to go to work. I mean I had to study. I had to do my assignments on time. I had to look after my own kids. I had to look after day care kids you know… Emotionally it was a lot of things going on. And then in between my in-laws would come here to visit us. Then family being here…ya family obligations. (Swati)
Tipping point	It was hard for me too because I used to work till late nights—9, 10 o'clock coming back home and we would hardly see each other, me and my husband…ya, because of the timings. And he would take care of my girl in the evening and I would go for my job… And then I decided let me do something for my, MY [laying emphasis] career. What I wanted to do you know? And that's how I started looking for options of a career in teaching. (Swati)
Grieving the loss of preferred career trajectory	So it has definitely been a disappointment… Let's say right now where I am at is not where I imagined I would be when I was 20 in terms of my career, you know. That's a little bit of a grieving process for me, to be honest. (Chandi)
Taking agency	When you want to do something about yourself you have to look for the information. The information will never [knocks twice on table] knock on your door and say "Hello, I am the information. You know you have to do that." No, you have to look for it. (Aduna)
Redirecting one's career path	I always wanted to be doing something with kids. So teaching especially little kids, not even like older ones [laughing]. Ya elementary school. Teaching was one of my main passion in the beginning, since the beginning so, ya, the wait was nice that I could continue here as an ECE [Early Childhood Education]. (Swati)
Emergence of a strengthened career identity	If you depend on a man, you depend to a system, you are not free… You have to earn your own money. As a woman, don't depend to anyone, even if you LOVE [laying emphasis] your husband, you love your family. I am sorry, you have to have your own independency, you know, you have to have your own freedom. Then you can say NO. (Aduna)

[1] Pseudonyms are used to maintain participant anonymity.

their career-related potential vis-à-vis their partners' despite either being on a promising career track or having an established career back home. Upon arrival in Canada, some participants furthered their education or accessed language services to improve their English or French; however, to ensure a smooth transition for their families, all participants did whatever was required of them to fulfill family needs toward *maintaining equilibrium*. This included securing a temporary job for economic survival, engaging in childcare responsibilities, and investing in their spouses' career advancement. After completely immersing themselves in achieving harmony within the family, participants one day found themselves reflecting on their career. With the passing of years, some participants began to identify what they felt they had lost with respect to their careers while performing roles related to being a mother and wife. This marked a *tipping point* towards revisiting their career goals to see what might best fit with their individual circumstances. During this revisiting, participants noticed a discrepancy between what they aspired to in terms of a career pre-migration versus what actually unfolded post-migration. For some participants, *grieving the loss* of their preferred career trajectory allowed acceptance of their new work-life reality, which in turn paved the way for meaningful action towards re-establishing their preferred career. By *taking agency* in terms of adopting a positive attitude and openness to new experiences, participants engaged in *redirecting their career path* by either finding parallels with previously cherished career goals or discovering their calling. Eventually, the *emergence of a strengthened career identity* became noticeable compared to the perhaps fragmented career identity during the initial years of settlement in Canada. Here participants described obtaining meaningfulness by fulfilling some of the values they cherished within a career. However, few participants believed that a strengthened career identity represented a final destination, but rather a step in a long series of future endeavors for career growth.

Discussion

Eight themes related to CID were generated, which shed light on how participants perceived their career-related interests and potential in terms of career roles acceptable to them. According to participants, career identity in the context of immigration can be impacted as early as the pre-migratory decision with their spouse regarding who among them will apply as the principal applicant versus dependent applicant. Couples mutually elected husbands as best-suited for the immigration application process because of perceived higher human capital (Sandell, 1977), ostensibly positioning wives as "followers" to host destinations despite their professional skills and economic potential (Inglis, 2003). Participants in this study speak of how, in hindsight, their "dependent" status seemed to cast a shadow on their own potential for a professional career in Canada.

The theme of maintaining equilibrium is well represented in the literature, where the dependent applicant—most often the woman—takes on a role of "family organizer" (Suto, 2009, p. 422) intended to shield the family from the transitional challenges of immigration and buttress the spouse's career prospects. While this theme supports the gender-role perspective and family investment hypothesis (Cobb-Clark & Crossley, 2004), it seems to be at a cost for the dependent women who experience downward career mobility regardless of their professional backgrounds (Banerjee & Phan, 2015).

Many participants experienced a discrepancy between what they aspired for versus what they experienced upon migration (e.g., devaluation of their foreign credentials, financial and time constraints related to re-training and/or education, language issues, perceived discriminatory hiring practices). Losing a once cherished career direction and changing occupational fields altogether confirms previous research showing that immigrants are often unable to access their pre-migration occupation (Bauder, 2003). However, participants in this study also spoke of a process of mourning that can accompany significant career change or loss.

At the same time, participants identified some facilitative experiences that furthered their

careers. For example, they adopted a positive attitude, flexibility, and persistence (Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan, & Cheng, 2011); were surrounded by supportive family members, friends, and colleagues (Vadjani-jahromi, 2016); and had access to government and community resources (Koert et al., 2011) related to funding education and free language classes. Utilization of available resources helped participants rekindle their sense of agency, which in turn helped them put their careers back on track. By acknowledging their changed work reality coupled with agentic control, participants described renegotiating their career identity in the host country (Chen, 2008) by either pursuing careers close to their cherished goals or finding their passion through happenstance.

Applying a grounded theory inspired approach in the present study, we came to appreciate CID as a dynamic process whereby career identity is never lost but instead may be threatened, weakened, or fragmented upon migration, only to be reconstructed after a period of grief through agency, optimism, and openness to new experiences. This unfolding is supported by a constructivist perspective where identity formation is viewed as a life-long process—restructured and revised in response to self-relevant life experiences (Berzonsky, 1989).

Limitations, Contributions, and Future Research

This study's findings may not be generalizable to all immigrant women, but they do offer insight into CID and contribute to the scarce literature available on those migrating with dependent status. Within a counselling context, the themes related to CID may provide useful information to career counsellors who play a crucial role in helping immigrant women process and navigate career transitions in a new country. Other implications include conceptualizing CID as a process rather than a destination, exploring the term "dependent" status with clients, and normalizing various experiences related to CID, such as grieving and maintaining equilibrium. In addition to credentialing issues common to most professional immigrants, immigrant women may experience gender-based responsibilities within the family that have implications for their career transition as a dependent applicant (Banerjee & Phan, 2015). Given that the immigration policy of Canada is tailored to meet the economic needs of the country, it would seem counterproductive to focus on only one-half of the economic class. We heed Iredale's (2005) caution that in order to fully utilize the skills of women coming to Canada, special attention needs to be directed towards "immigration policies to ensure that they are not only gender neutral but more importantly that they are gender sensitive to the needs and special circumstances of women" (p. 165). While this study unveiled themes and suggests temporality between them, a full-fledged grounded theory study with a larger sample size could generate a substantial theory related to CID among immigrant women arriving as dependents.

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Graduate Student Research Briefs

Context and Practices of University Student Services for International Students' Workforce Integration: Research-in-Brief

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Acknowledgment

Research conducted by Jon Woodend in 2013, at the University of Calgary, Educational Psychology – Werklund School of Education as part of a course for a master's degree. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Tom Strong for his guidance in this research.

Abstract

As universities recruit greater numbers of international students and governments seek to retain them as skilled workers, researchers have started to again investigate their integration experiences. A gap in the literature is the long-term career integration of international students, particularly the contextual influences that affect it. One such influence is that of university student services. This pilot study looked at the perspectives of three university student service personnel in career services, international student services, and alumni and leadership services and the ways in which they are working with international students to support their workplace integration. Specifically, this study highlighted the tensions university student services personnel face in providing relevant support while adhering to institutional policy, the gaps in their ability to help students, and ideas about future directions in their work with students.

Keywords: international students; student services; post-secondary; workforce integration

Recently, researchers have again turned their attention to international students amid the changing priorities of universities and governments (Arthur, 2017). Specifically, universities are recruiting increasing numbers of international students in order to address internationalization policies (CBIE, 2014), while governments, such as the federal Canadian government, are recognizing the potential of international students as future skilled participants in the labour market (CIC, 2016). In the past, much of the research focused on international students' initial adjustment to the host culture, with little investigation into their long-term career development (Arthur & Flynn, 2013). Furthermore, research largely focused on the intrinsic or personal agency of international students to improve their situation, with little investigation into contextual influences that impact their adjustment and transition.

As universities are typically the main point of contact and source of support for international students, a critical piece to understanding their successful transition and integration into the workforce is the exploration of student services offered by universities (CBIE, 2014). To address this gap, the goal of this pilot study was to begin investigating the context and practices of university student services in supporting international students to integrate into the Canadian workforce. As such, the overarching research questions were (a) how are university student services working with international students for Canadian workforce integration? And (b) where are the gaps in assisting international students to integrate into the Canadian workforce?

Method

In conceptualizing the study, a qualitative approach,

grounded in social constructionism was used; that is, reality is not objective but subjectively understood based on individuals' social interactions, culture, and language (Gergen, 1985). Specifically, I used the biographical narrative method (Lichtman, 2012). This method allowed the exploration of the first-person perspectives of university student services personnel in assisting international students while also including contextual information that contributed to these perspectives (Frost & Ouellette, 2011).

In terms of research design, I contacted three different student services at a university in Western Canada were contacted and volunteers were asked for from each to speak about their experiences in helping international students prepare for integration into the Canadian workforce. There were three participants, one each from career services, international student services, and alumni and leadership services. An hour-long, in-person, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted which were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the authors. In regards to the participants, all identified as White-Canadian, two were female and one was male, and their ages ranged from 25 to 50 years old. All three had a bachelor's degree, had been in their current position for two years to 10 years, and had a mandate to work specifically with international students.

For analysis, the biographical narrative method is quite flexible (Lichtman, 2012), and so a thematic analysis was used to determine the research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, codes were generated from the raw data. Then they were grouped into similar categories, before combining these categories under conceptually relevant themes. Two independent researchers, one faculty member and one graduate students who were both knowledgeable in the method, reviewed the codes, categories, and themes for their appropriateness, relevance, and logic. Finally, they were ordered, moving chronologically from past and present experiences to future plans in order to portray the biographical narrative of the participants in their interactions with helping international students integrate into the Canadian workforce.

Results

There were five key themes. First, there was *vocational development* of the participants, which was related to participants' ideas around their previous experiences that brought them to their current roles. Participants identified that they either had a personal or a professional experience that linked them to working with international students. One participant, pseudonym Rosie, noted:

> I was an international student during my undergraduate degree and my international student advisor, at the other institution, they helped me to make sure I had a really great experience. The thought of being able to do that for students here motivated me to seek this position.

Second, there was the participants' *sense of responsibilities* in working with international students. Specifically, participants noted that the university and department they worked in advocated for the personal agency of the students to seek integration within the campus community and Canadian workplace. At the same time, this mandate conflicted with participants' experience in working with some international students, who often requested a more directive approach, putting the participants in an unknown situation of adhering to policy or helping students in the way they needed. Tim shared:

> Another student was working on campus and wanted to change [her job] and we went through the process of revising the cover letter and résumé and I gave her significant feedback. Sometimes I actually have to be really hands on… I don't know if that's good. We're not supposed to be hands on.

A third theme was that, even with this disconnection between policy and students' needs, the participants believed in the *university services effectiveness* in helping international students to succeed. Furthermore, these services were particularly effective when the students were also working to help themselves. Tina explained, "Everything is in place for an international student to succeed and even though there are a number of possibilities for

services, students need to ask questions. When students are already fairly capable then they are easier to help".

A fourth theme was the *roadblocks* identified by the participants. In particular, participants mentioned that there were critical structural and cultural barriers that impeded their work with students. Rosie shared that "it's a challenge to make connections with international students because there are so many of them on campus and I by no means have the ability to meet with them all". Adding to that, Tim explained, "people from some cultures need to learn to sell themselves in the Canadian workforce. It could be connected to language competence but it's more than that, it's how they express themselves verbally".

The final key theme was the *future directions* participants thought were needed to assist international students. Participants were divided with Tina thinking that university student services need to be more directive, noting that "we [university services] need to try harder to educate about Canadian workplace customs and to make it mandatory or they won't attend". Conversely, Tim felt that rather than university student services, students needed to do more about their situation, exclaiming "students need to be more proactive and to learn to stop focusing on their research and instead get experience, paid or volunteer"

.

Implications and Conclusion

From these key findings, there are some implications that may be transferable to other university services contexts. For practice, university student services personnel in this study identified trying to work appropriately and effectively with international students, while also being mindful of the institutional mandates that were sometimes counter to this work. The participants in this study suggested that it would be helpful if universities consulted with service personnel that work with and support international students in order to create service provision that is culturally sensitive to their needs. Given that this was a pilot study at one university with a smaller sample size, further research could help to understand the context and needs of university services personnel across Canada and if the themes raised in this study are applicable more broadly. Moreover, additional investigation is needed around effective strategies for working with students who do not behave in a way that is considered proactive within a Western context (e.g., actively seeking out support, working independently). Although international students may access services readily, in the context of this pilot study, international students seem to be less well-served by existing services than students who are more acculturated to Canadian workplace norms, possibly because these approaches do not address their needs.

Universities will continue to recruit international students (CBIE, 2014), who often seek a foreign education in order to advance immigration hopes (Arthur & Flynn, 2013). As the primary point of contact for international students, universities have a unique role in supporting students' integration not just to the campus community but also to the larger Canadian society. Although the participants in this study identified success in assisting international students, there remained a gap in service provision for them in addressing students' need for more directive assistance. As such, continued investigation into culturally appropriate and effective student services is needed to understand the contexts in which international students successful with this integration.

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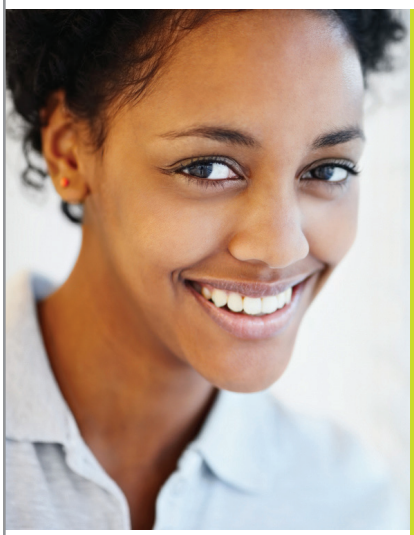

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2. The first page should contain the article title, author's name, affiliation, mailing address, email address to which correspondence should be sent, and acknowledgements (if any). To ensure anonymity in the reviewing process, the author's names should not appear anywhere else on the manuscript.

3. The second and third pages should contain an English/French version of an abstract not exceeding 200 words.

4. Language and format (heading, tables, figures, citations, references) must conform to the style of the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th edition (APA).*

5. All figures and tables must appear on separate sheets and be print-ready.

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7. The evaluation of manuscripts include criteria such as: significance and currency of the topic; contribution to new knowledge in the field; appropriateness of the methodology or approach; and the clarity of presentation. The review process normally does not exceed three or four months.

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1. Les manuscrits doivent être tapés à double interligne sur du papier 8 ½ x 11 de qualité. Les articles ne devraient pas dépasser 30 pages (y compris les références, les tableaux, les graphiques, les annexes).

2. La première page doit contenir le titre de l'article, le nom de l'auteur(e), l'affiliation, l'adresse postale, le courrier électronique et les remerciements (s'il y a lieu). Pour assurer l'anonymat du processus d'évaluation, le nom de l'auteur ne doit apparaître à aucun autre endroit sur le manuscrit.

3. Les deuxième et troisième pages devront contenir une version française et une version anglaise du résumé dont la longueur ne dépasse pas 200 mots.

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

5. Les graphiques et les tableaux doivent être présentés sur des feuilles séparées afin de faciliter le processus de photographie.

6. Les manuscrits doivent être soumis en format MS Word.

7. L'évaluation des articles se fera selon des critères tels que : l'importance et l'actualité du sujet, la contribution à l'avancement des connaissances dans le domaine, une approche méthodologique adéquate et la clarté de la présentation. En général, le processus d'évaluation n'excède pas quatre mois.

8. La soumission d'un manuscrit à la *Revue canadienne de développement de carrière* signifie que cet article n'est pas présentement soumis ailleurs pour fin de publication.

18

VOL 17 / NO 2

In this issue
Dans ce numéro

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