

# 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 individual's 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 de-

scribed 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 metaphorical 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 interven-

tion 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, self-reflection, 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

Scale	Mean Scores		r	t	df	Hedges' s g
	Pre (A) (n = 28)	Post (B) (n = 28)				
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

Table 2  
Effects of the Online Intervention

Scale	Mean Scores		<i>r</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Hedges' <i>g</i>
	Pre (A) ( <i>n</i> = 24)	Post (B) ( <i>n</i> = 24)				
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*

Scale	Estimated Marginal Means at T2		F	p	$\eta^2_p$
	F2F (n = 28)	Online (n = 24)			
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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