

Improving unmatched co-op students' emotional wellbeing: Test of two brief interventions

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Previous research suggests that going unmatched in the competitive co-op job search process might have an emotional cost. This study examined the feasibility and efficacy of interventions for improving unmatched co-op students' emotional wellbeing. Participants ($n = 74$) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a positive psychology based writing task, a toolkit with materials and information about coping with stress, or a control condition. They completed a measure of emotional wellbeing before and after the intervention period (one week long). Controlling for pre-intervention emotional wellbeing, statistically significant gains in emotional wellbeing were reported only by those in the writing task condition. Administering positive interventions such as instructions to focus on "good things" may be particularly feasible and effective in the co-op context. Implications for co-op practitioners and future research are presented.

Keywords: Co-op students, job search, emotions, intervention, ANCOVA

Several forms of work-integrated education include a competitive job application process. In this process, students compete for jobs. They review employers' job postings and submit applications. Employers then assess candidates, interview them, and make hiring decisions. This process is particularly common in cooperative education (co-op). Co-op refers to a program of alternating academic and paid work terms, each lasting typically four-months long. It is believed that competing for jobs helps students to "[...] develop the ability to assess their skill level, to prepare a polished résumé, and to interview successfully" (Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, 2005, p. 2).

The downside to this arrangement is that some students may go unmatched with employers. Going unmatched means to participate in the job search process but not receive an offer of employment from any employer. Employment dynamics are complex and there could be several reasons for this result. For instance, those students who are more confident in their interview skills may fair better than others in the job application process (e.g., Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006). The factors that predict the match outcome are beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the focus is on the consequences of going unmatched.

Emotional Wellbeing

The consequences of going unmatched are potentially negative. This paper addresses one such negative consequence: a decrease in emotional wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing is a balance of positive emotions such as joy and inspiration and negative emotions such as shame and regret (Fredrickson &

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Joiner, 2002). Emotional wellbeing is greater when one's daily experience of positive emotions outweighs the experience of negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2009).

It is likely that going unmatched has a negative effect on co-op students' emotional wellbeing (Cormier & Drewery, 2017). In some co-op programs, students who go unmatched and who do not find a suitable position cannot continue in their studies. Students are usually sensitive to this fact and thus place a great deal of importance on being successful in the job match process. If they go unmatched, they feel as though they failed and as though they were rejected (Cormier & Drewery, 2017). These feelings can take a toll on emotional wellbeing (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009).

Decreases in emotional wellbeing are problematic for multiple reasons. It may be that such decreases negatively impact co-op students' academic performance. Emotions influence students' learning processes and outcomes (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). Feeling down, rejected, and perhaps preoccupied with understanding their match outcome may mean students are distracted from their studies. Indeed, some research (Oldfield, Rodwell, Curry, & Marks, 2018) indicates that students' emotions are predictors of their class attendance. On the other hand, increasing positive emotions in such a situation may mean students are better prepared to perform academically in the future (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

Reduced emotional wellbeing after going unmatched may also impact future job search performance. Those who go unmatched still face the challenge of trying to find work. In some co-op programs, job searches may continue for months until the unmatched student finds a job. Those with low emotional wellbeing likely perform worse in subsequent job searches compared to those with high emotional wellbeing. Research by Holmes and Werbel (1992) suggests that positive feelings about one's self and one's skills predicted job seekers' employment status three months later. Those who had more positive feelings were more successful compared to those with more negative feelings.

These studies suggest that understanding how to improve unmatched students' emotional wellbeing is of interest. However, the literature lacks a focus on how to support those students who are unsuccessful in the match process. In general, studies of emotional wellbeing in work-integrated education settings are scarce. Those that do examine emotional wellbeing have focused on the work context, including transitioning to co-op work terms (McBeath, Drysdale, & Bohn, 2017) and experiences in the workplace (Drewery, Pretti, & Barclay, 2016). In the current research, the focus is towards the emotional wellbeing of unmatched co-op students and what can be done to improve it.

Coping with Going Unmatched

While the initial reaction to going unmatched may be negative (Cormier & Drewery, 2017), improving emotional wellbeing may depend on how students cope with the situation. Coping is the process through which individuals make sense of negative events and deal with them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It involves the management of internal states (thoughts and feelings) and external conditions that are perceived to be taxing on personal resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The difference between poor emotional wellbeing and resilient emotional wellbeing depends on individuals' ability to cope (Fredrickson, 2004). Thus, how students cope with going unmatched may determine their emotional wellbeing.

There are several strategies people can use to cope with negative events. These strategies vary in terms of their positive and negative influences on emotional wellbeing. That is, some are more effective than others in improving emotional wellbeing under stressful circumstances (Lazarus, 1991). For instance,

maladaptive strategies such as rumination or the use of drugs and alcohol are unlikely to help the situation (Lazarus, 1991). Instead, strategies that help to make sense of the situation and address its root causes tend to be better (Lazarus, 1991). Coping strategies also differ in emphasis on the problem specifically, and the emotions produced by that problem. For instance, a problem-focused coping strategy could be to seek a résumé critique or to participate in mock interviews to improve the chances of being hired in the future. Emotion-focused strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal (e.g., downplaying the severity of the event) can also help to improve emotional wellbeing.

While there are several strategies that may help co-op students cope with going unmatched, students do not always select the most useful coping strategy. Students may instead select strategies because they perceived those strategies to have more immediate benefits or because they are unaware of other ways of addressing the situation. One study of practicum students (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan, & Mannix-McNamara, 2014) found that students frequently dealt with stress by becoming hostile, distancing themselves, and escaping (e.g., using drugs). These strategies are unlikely to enhance emotional wellbeing. This suggests that students who go unmatched might have trouble coping with going unmatched in the absence of other support.

Supporting Students' Coping Processes

The challenge for co-op departments is to identify ways to support unmatched co-op students. There is an important practical aspect to a focus on unmatched students. Co-op departments may not have the resources to identify traits that play a role in explaining students' responses to going unmatched. For instance, though a trait such as self-efficacy may be relevant, it is difficult to discern which students have high self-efficacy and which have low self-efficacy. Alternatively, systems already in place in most co-op programs can easily identify students based on their employment status match outcome and therefore can target students to support.

Still, supporting unmatched students is complicated by the limited resources at a department's disposal. Rarely will co-op departments have unlimited staff resources to support unmatched students. It is unlikely that health professionals are on staff and can devote time to working face-to-face with each unmatched student. Instead, it may be more reasonable to look for solutions that can be administered by students themselves.

There is good evidence in the literature that even small, brief, self-administered exercises can enhance emotional wellbeing. So-called "positive psychological interventions" that focus on curbing negative thoughts and emotions and enhancing positive ones seem to be effective (e.g., Chancellor, Layous, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Zhou et al., 2016). For instance, simply reflecting on one's own thoughts and experiences in the form of a writing exercise can increase emotional wellbeing (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

For these reasons, we examined whether interventions in the form of "brief exercises" might improve emotional wellbeing for unmatched co-op students. We examined the impact of two different interventions on emotional wellbeing. The first intervention was based on the premise that information about coping is a resource that students can use to overcome the situation. The second intervention was based on the premise that changing focus from negative events to positive ones increases emotional wellbeing. Theory underlying these interventions is described below.

Information as a Coping Resource

One perspective in the coping literature is that coping resources help with the coping process (Lazarus, 1991). One coping resource that may be particularly effective is information about coping and how to cope. Coping is a psychological process that most people are familiar with intuitively. However, they may be less familiar with some specific tactics that help with coping. For instance, there are several exercises individuals can use to control their breathing, and these exercises are thought to help with reducing anxiety (e.g., Chen, Huang, Chien, & Cheng, 2017). Informational resources that make these practices known may therefore become resources. Having more resources (information) at their disposal may make students more skilled and confident in addressing the situation at hand. In this way, providing unmatched co-op students with informational support may be instrumental in boosting emotional wellbeing (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003).

Coping by Changing Focus

Another way in which emotional wellbeing may be improved is through shifting focus from negative events to positive ones. Foundational literature in positive psychology (Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) posits that focusing on strengths over weaknesses, showing gratitude for things we take for granted, and being compassionate to the self are forms of improving emotional wellbeing. Coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) further suggests that cognitive reappraisal, changing one's view about an event, affects the coping process. People have the ability to change the way that they think about an event. Changing one's view about negative events, such as by placing it in context alongside more positive events, can change the meaning of those negative events altogether (Fredrickson, 2001). Specifically, immersing one's self in more positive events can attenuate the effects of negative events on one's positive and negative emotions (Seligman et al., 2005). Unmatched students who are reminded of other positive events in their lives might therefore shift their focus and improve their emotional wellbeing.

METHOD

Study Overview

Although co-op students may experience a decline in emotional wellbeing as a result of going unmatched, it is unclear how co-op departments might support those students. The literature suggests that brief interventions could be feasible in that they could be self-administered and effective in improving emotional wellbeing. To examine this possibility, we designed an experiment involving two interventions and a control group. The goal of the experiment was to determine whether emotional wellbeing after a one-week intervention period differed between the treatment and control groups.

Participants and Procedure

Participants ($n = 74$) were co-op students at one Canadian university who had been through a competitive job application process in late 2016 or early 2017 but were unmatched with an employer. All participants were looking for their first co-op job. This group was of interest because they are particularly at-risk of going unmatched relative to their more senior competition. Upon institutional ethics approval (no. 21011), participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire about their experiences of being unmatched. After completing the questionnaire, they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Participants performed tasks associated with their condition for one week (seven days). At the end of that week, participants were invited to complete a post-intervention

questionnaire. Measures on both questionnaires were identical, except that the pre-intervention questionnaire contained demographic questions and the post-intervention questionnaire included questions about the intervention experience. All participants completed the questionnaire at both time points. The questionnaires took roughly 10 minutes to complete and participants received nominal pay in appreciation for their time.

Conditions

After completing the pre-intervention questionnaire, participants were randomly assigned to a control condition or one of two intervention conditions. Half of the participants ($n = 38$) were assigned to the control condition. In the control condition, participants either were told that they would be contacted in one week's time to complete another questionnaire, or were instructed to complete a writing task unrelated to the situation. In that task, participants recalled and wrote about memories from their early childhood. This task has been used as a control condition in previous emotional wellbeing intervention studies (e.g., Seligman et al., 2005). Whether participants received no instruction at all or completed the unrelated writing task had no impact on emotional wellbeing at the end of the study period. Thus, both groups were combined as a control group.

The other half ($n = 36$) of the students were assigned to either the *information* condition or the *refocus* condition. Participants in both intervention conditions received instructions to participate in a task for at least 10 minutes a day each day over the period of one full week (seven days). In the information condition, participants ($n = 17$) were instructed to interact with materials provided to them in the form of a coping "toolkit." The toolkit was designed by a local entrepreneur who was marketing a product to address university students' stress. The toolkit included several items (a stress ball, chewing gum, ear plugs, and a sleeping mask) that were not of central interest to this study, but were included to maintain the integrity of the product. The contents of the toolkit that were of interest were informational resources. These informational resources were presented as 25 flashcards containing facts and tips about stress and how to reduce it. The flashcards draw from several simple techniques that students can use to notice stress and alleviate it. An example is a card describing a "box breathing" technique which is a four-step technique for drawing attention to and gaining control over one's breathing. Other examples of the cards include tips on how to keep an effective journal, how to address physical aches and pains (e.g., through stretching) when sitting and working for long periods, and information regarding support services (e.g., mental health crisis hotline). The information on these cards therefore draw from a diverse body of practices, from mindfulness to physiological tension relief, but they are all consistent with the principles of coping, including bringing awareness to stress and taking steps to address it directly (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). As such, the cards act as an informational resource that may help unmatched students confront stress and increase emotional wellbeing.

The remaining participants ($n = 19$) were assigned to the refocus condition. Participants in this condition were instructed to complete an online writing task. The online writing task, originally designed by Seligman et al. (2005) asked participants to (a) write about three good things that happened that day or more generally in their lives and (b) to provide a causal explanation for those things. A recent review of positive psychological interventions showed that writing about positive events can improve emotional wellbeing (Zhou et al., 2016). Students were asked to describe why those events occurred so that they further immersed themselves in those events, essentially reliving those events and making them more vivid. The instruction provided to participants was to complete the exercise privately, such as in a private diary or on a computer. They were asked not to share these

events with others so that they could write about events without concern for others' perceptions of those events. Like in the information condition, participants in this condition were instructed to take about 10 minutes each day for seven days to complete the task.

Measures

The central measure of the study was participants' emotional wellbeing. Consistent with previous research (Fredrickson, 2009), emotional wellbeing was operationalized as the ratio between positive and negative emotions. Positive and negative emotions were measured using the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). PANAS contains 20 items that represent positive (interested, excited, strong, enthusiastic, proud, alert, inspired, determined, attentive, and active) and negative (distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, and afraid) emotions. Participants were instructed to read each item and indicate the extent to which they felt that emotion. Responses to each item were provided on a five-point scale where 1 = "very slightly or not at all", 2 = "a little", 3 = "moderately", 4 = "quite a bit", and 5 = "extremely." The measure of emotional wellbeing was constructed by dividing the sum of all positive items by the sum of all negative items. Thus, higher scores represent a greater (more positive) ratio between positive emotions and negative ones. Emotional wellbeing was measured at two time points: once at the beginning of the study, and again seven days later (at the end of the intervention period).

In addition to the measure of emotional wellbeing, participants also completed measures about themselves and their experiences with their assigned activities (intervention conditions only). On the pre-intervention questionnaire they provided their age, gender (1 = female, 2 = male), estimated academic average, and their faculty of study. These were used to characterize the sample and as covariates in analyses. On the post-intervention questionnaire, they indicated the number of minutes that they had performed the tasks associated with their condition. This was used to ensure that participants had followed instructions.

RESULTS

Description of Sample and Measures

Participants were between 17 and 25 years old ($M = 18.73$, $SD = .98$) and the majority were female (66.2%). The academic average of participants ranged from 60% to 96% ($M = 80.02$, $SD = 7.39$). The smallest group of participants (10.8%) were studying in the faculty of environment while the largest group (31.1%) were studying engineering. There was an even distribution amongst the remaining faculties. The average pre-intervention positive affect reported by participants across the conditions was 2.50 ($SD = .71$) out of five and the average pre-intervention negative affect was 2.82 ($SD = .93$). Thus, the average pre-intervention emotional wellbeing score was $-.32$ ($SD = 1.01$).

Manipulation Check

To ensure that they followed instructions, participants in the intervention conditions were asked to report the average number of minutes per day that they participated in their assigned exercise. Participants in the information condition reported participating for an average of 7.76 minutes per day ($SD = 6.40$). Participants in the refocus condition reported participating for an average of 10.21 minutes per day ($SD = 3.23$). These were deemed to be sufficient for further analyses, and there was no statistically significant difference between the conditions in terms of reported participation, $t(34) = 1.47$, $p = .15$.

Repeated Measures ANCOVA Results

A repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine whether emotional wellbeing improved as a result of the interventions relative to the control condition. The within-subjects factor was time, which has two levels (pre-intervention and post-intervention). The between-subjects factor was condition, which had three levels (control, information, and refocus). Participants' gender was included as a covariate. Gender was included as a covariate because females were expected to have greater post-intervention emotional wellbeing compared to males. Females in general tend to be more likely than males to engage in most coping strategies (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). They may be better in general at rebounding after an event such as going unmatched.

Results showed a main effect for gender, $F(1, 70) = 5.17, p = .03$. Pre-intervention emotional wellbeing was similar for males and females, but males ($M = .81, SD = 1.40$) reported higher post-intervention emotional wellbeing than did females ($M = .10, SD = 1.23$), $t(72) = 2.27, p = .03$. The main effect for time was not significant, but the time by condition interaction effect was significant, $F(2, 70) = 3.51, p = .04$. This suggests that emotional wellbeing differed between pre-intervention and post-intervention for participants in at least one of the conditions. Post-hoc ANOVAs with Bonferroni correction and examination of the means plot (Figure 1) were used to determine the nature of the interaction. Results indicate that emotional wellbeing did not differ between the conditions prior to the intervention, $F(2, 71) = .03, p = .97$. That is, emotional wellbeing was similar across the groups prior to the intervention period.

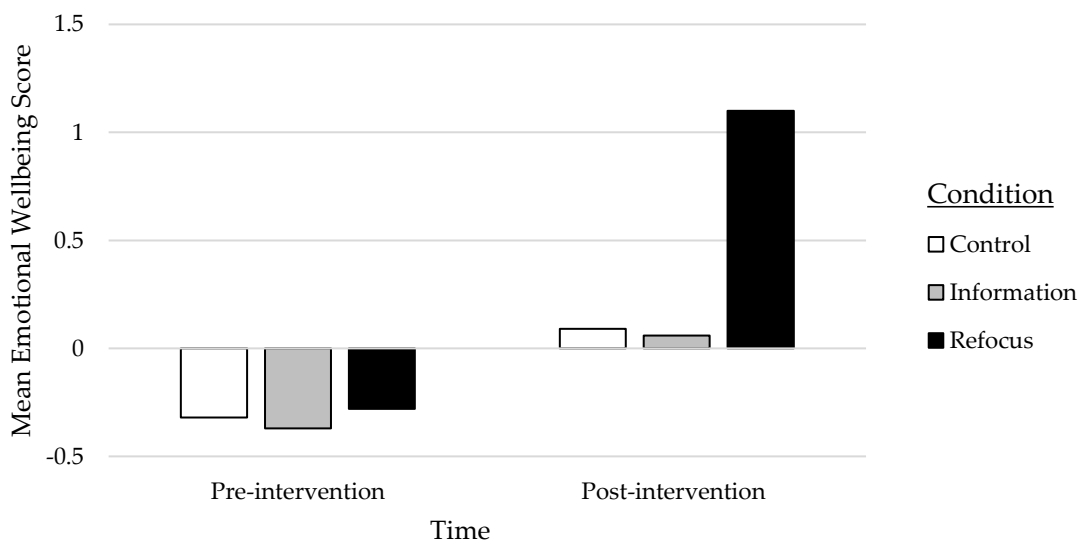


FIGURE 1: Pre-intervention and post-intervention emotional wellbeing for participants in three study conditions ($n = 74$). Mean emotional wellbeing score represents the ratio between positive emotions and negative emotions.

Results further showed that post-intervention emotional wellbeing did differ between the three conditions, $F(2, 71) = 4.58, p = .01$. Post-intervention emotional wellbeing for the information condition ($M = .06, SD = 1.23$) did not differ from the control condition ($M = .09, SD = 1.37$). Post-intervention emotional wellbeing for the refocus condition ($M = 1.10, SD = 1.05$) was significantly greater than the control condition, $p = .02$. The difference between the refocus condition and information condition also

approached significance, $p = .05$. Together, these results suggest that emotional wellbeing improved over time specifically for those participants who refocused their attention onto good things in their lives but did not for those who received information about stress and how to cope with it.

DISCUSSION

There is general consensus that co-op provides many benefits to student participants (Braunstein, Takei, Wang, & Loken, 2011). The majority of these benefits are believed to come from the work experience itself. However, benefits may also come from the competitive job search process (Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, 2005). At the same time, this competition means that some students go unmatched with employers. Going unmatched can have an emotional cost (Cormier & Drewery, 2017). Drawing from the coping and positive psychology literature, this study examined whether co-op programs might be able to help improve unmatched students' emotional wellbeing.

Efficacy of Proposed Interventions

These results suggest that, compared to the control group, students who shifted their focus towards more positive events in their lives experienced improved emotional wellbeing. This result is consistent with the positive psychology literature which had highlighted the efficacy of thinking about positive aspects of life when things go wrong (e.g., Zhou et al., 2016). It also speaks more generally to the power of a positive psychological approach to improving students' wellbeing. The idea behind this activity is that students attenuate focus on the bad (they didn't get a job) and shift towards the good (e.g., meaningful friendships, being at a great university) (Seligman et al., 2005). It seems that this activity could be helpful for students who are experiencing more negative emotions and fewer positive ones as a result of not getting a co-op job. By participating in this or a similar activity, students might change their downward emotional spiral and put themselves on a path towards success (Fredrickson, 2009).

Results surprisingly suggest that post-intervention emotional wellbeing was no better amongst those in the information condition than for those in the control condition. Recall that participants in the information condition received a small 'toolkit' which contained information about stress and how to cope with stressful conditions. Information can often act as a coping resource which may help individuals overcome stressful situations (Lazarus, 1991). This did not appear to be the case in the present study. There are several possible explanations for this. It may be that students need time to internalize the information that they are presented. While writing about positive events requires little effort for most, exposure to information about coping might have a more positive influence on emotional wellbeing over a much longer trajectory. Similarly, while 10 minutes may be enough to refocus on positive events (Seligman et al., 2005), perhaps exposure to coping resources requires more concentrated effort. We saw nothing in the data to suggest that receiving information had a negative impact on emotional wellbeing. Thus, informational support could be a useful peripheral support provided by co-op departments.

Feasibility of Interventions

It is not enough for emotional wellbeing interventions to be effective, they also must be feasible. Prior research had not examined whether there was a reasonably cost-effective opportunity to improve unmatched students' emotional wellbeing. Many campuses offer excellent support for students' health and wellbeing, for example, health services and recreational activities that can improve the way that students feel. Less attention has been given to the role that co-op services might play in addressing emotional wellbeing. Co-op departments are typically interested in scalable solutions, as they

experience more pressure to deliver their services. Thus, the focus of this study was on approaches to addressing emotional wellbeing that did not necessarily need to include staff.

The findings of the study highlight the opportunity for computer-administered interventions. Coordinating administration of the toolkit with students was difficult. Indeed, fewer students who agreed to participate in the study actually received the toolkit because of scheduling conflicts. Scaled to the larger context of co-op, it may be too taxing on staff time to administer such an intervention directly to students. Sending students prompts directly via a computer screen may be a better alternative. Students are already likely to be using their digital devices, so interventions such as the writing task in this study that require only a screen might be the most feasible. Research indeed suggests there is an opportunity to administer several kinds of positive interventions via computer (e.g., Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss, 2013). It is no secret that most students have access to digital devices, especially smart phones. It could be useful to explore the opportunity to administer interventions to unmatched students in this way. Indeed, at the time of writing, we recognize that there are several free applications concerning coping and other positive psychological interventions.

Co-op Students' Wellbeing

In a more general sense, this study contributes to the growing conversation about students' health and wellbeing and specifically to a rather absent conversation of wellbeing in co-op. The topic of students' mental health and wellness has been growing in importance for some time. This study compliments that of Cormier and Drewery (2017) which commented that researchers and practitioners should take a critical look at the ways in which components of the co-op model influence students' wellbeing. Previous research suggests that the workplace (Drewery et al., 2016) and transitions to the workplace (McBeath et al., 2017) are areas in which we might be concerned with students' wellbeing. There may be opportunity to design support mechanisms for increasing the emotional wellbeing of students who are unsuccessful in getting a co-op placement. Results suggest that there is opportunity for co-op departments, perhaps in conjunction with mental health professionals, to provide a more positive experience for unmatched students.

Limitations and Future Research

The sample in this study was small, generalizable only to first work term students, and specific to co-op at one university. Future research might explore a similar research design with different participants in other contexts. Longitudinal designs may help to uncover the long-term effects of these interventions. The data plotted in Figure 1 indicate that emotional wellbeing trends upwards even for those in the control condition. Longer studies may uncover whether this is simply a reflection of socially desirable response or evidence of longer-term resilience.

Future studies could also explore alternative interventions, perhaps also from the positive psychology literature (for examples, see Gander et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2016). Future research might also focus on organizational capacity for these interventions. The limited resources available to many co-op departments suggest that finding effective and efficient ways of improving students' wellbeing is desirable. The two inventions implemented in this study were chosen because they are easily replicated in other settings and they are self-administered, so they require little support. Especially in the case of the writing task, some interventions could be delivered as easily as via email, text, or a very brief phone call.

The study was also limited in its focus on unmatched students. We did not account for several factors that may be relevant to the coping process. For instance, self-efficacy (confidence in overcoming challenges) could be considered a coping resource (Lazarus, 1991). Potentially, those with more confidence in general are more resilient to going unmatched because they expect that they will succeed in the future. In line with this point, future research should explore the experience of going unmatched more generally. An important yet unanswered question is: what factors predict the match outcome? Social factors, academic performance, confidence, health conditions, or many other factors could explain which students go unmatched. Research that provides insight into this topic is of critical importance across work-integrated education contexts which are so often concerned with employment and employability.

Implications for Practice

What can co-op practitioners do to support unmatched co-op students' emotional wellbeing? Beyond the specific nature of the one intervention found to be effective in this study, insights point to the opportunity for developing general programmatic solutions. The key to success may be in identifying and reaching out to unmatched students. In co-op programs that record matches on an electronic system, a list of unmatched students could be populated. Once those students are identified, a system could be used to reach out with specific instructions, questions, or strategies. For example, an email could be sent to those students who are not matched reminding them of important next steps and inviting them to try out an activity addressing emotional wellbeing. Students could be reminded of existing resources, such as mock interviews and résumé critiques that could improve success in subsequent job searches. That same email could also point students to existing campus resources that address health and wellbeing in general ways (e.g., counsellors, psychologists, physical activity programs). In addition, practitioners could send messages about specific activities students might chose to try to improve wellbeing.

Conclusion

A writing activity that directs attention to positive life events and away from the negativity of being unmatched may improve the emotional wellbeing of unmatched co-op students. This is but one example of the activities that staff could share with their unmatched co-op students. We encourage staff and researchers to think about what similar interventions work best for their students and in their contexts. Together, they can implement solutions that improve the co-op experience for those who are unmatched and who may need an emotional "boost" along the way.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE). Since then the readership and authorship has become more international and terminology usage in the literature has favored the broader term of WIL. In response to these changes, the journal name was changed to the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning in 2018.

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum*". Examples of such practice includes work placements, work-terms, internships, practicum, cooperative education (Co-op), fieldwork, work-related projects/competitions, service learning, entrepreneurship, student-led enterprise, applied projects, simulations (including virtual WIL), etc. WIL shares similar aims and underpinning theories of learning as the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training, however, each of these fields are seen as separate fields.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily of two forms; 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider best practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data. And a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Best practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal also seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of best practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or is situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.



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