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Experimental Social Innovation and Client-Centered Job-Seeking Programs[1,2]

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It is argued that Experimental Social Innovation, the development and refinement of social interventions based on rigorous systematic assessment of outcome and process, can contribute to true social change. This approach is illustrated through experimental evaluations of promising client-centered job placement models. In Study 1 earlier research is advanced by evaluating an abbreviated form of the job club with a new population—older job seekers. Study 2 extends Study 1 by comparing this model with another form of client-centered assistance—use of a job search handbook. Both experiments indicated that the modified job club was an effective model for facilitating older worker employment. Findings based on assessment of program processes (e.g., job search knowledge and social support) are also presented and discussed.

Over the past half decade funding for human services such as mental health, employment and training, delinquency, substance abuse, education, and health, as well as research on these and other issues, has been cut dramatically. Because of an almost universal rebellion against increasing taxes, the

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massive federal deficit, and the specter of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act looming on the horizon, the funding picture for human services is likely to get worse long before it gets better. This scenario has prompted some to predict a growing "human services shortfall" (Fishman & Neigher, 1982) with potentially serious consequences. Thus, the advent of Reaganomics presents the human services community with an unwelcome but pressing challenge: to meet growing needs with shrinking resources.

In spite of our increased understanding of behavioral and social processes, the complexity of most social problems and the likelihood that intervention effects interact significantly with a wide variety of social factors has frustrated simplistic and isolated attempts to develop useful useful social interventions (Campbell, 1972). As a consequence, a growing chorus of observers/experts have concluded that real progress toward meaningful social change will come only from using rigorous and systematic research to guide incremental staged innovation (Davidson, Redner, & Saul, 1983; Fairweather & Tornatzky, 1979; Keisler, 1966; Paul, 1967). Minimally, they argue, this research should tell us if our interventions work (do they achieve their stated objective(s)); ideally, this research should tell us with whom, under what circumstances, and how (what are the intervention's instrumental processes) they work.

There is considerable convergence among these same experts on a methodological blueprint that would yield the kind of information necessary for incremental innovation. Common prescriptions include (a) using the most inferentially powerful design possible, preferably a true experiment; (b) pursuing an assessment approach that includes multivariate and synchronous measurement of outcome and other variables (i.e., participant and program process); (c) measuring outcomes that represent meaningful change in the problem under study, preferably temporally and physically external to the intervention situation; (d) monitoring change longitudinally; (e) sensitivity to interaction effects between and within classes of variables (i.e., outcome, subject, treatment, setting, problem, etc.); and (f) confirming and extending findings through experimental replications. Although this methodological blueprint is well articulated and the inferential and practical payoffs from following some or all of it are obvious, examples of what Fairweather and Tornatzky (1977) have called Experimental Social Innovation on social problems are all too rare.

Recent dramatic reductions in funding for human services dictate that we redouble our efforts to develop, refine, and implement useful social innovations. With this need in mind, we provide an illustration of Experimental Social Innovation (ESI) related to a major social problem—unemployment—and discuss how this approach might contribute to the development of more effective and efficient interventions. To this end, we summarize research on

promising "client-centered" job placement models and report on two recent studies that attempted to both replicate and extend earlier work.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE JOB-FINDING PROCESS

Unemployment is a serious social problem with devastating consequences for society and the individual. On the one hand, unemployment results in a significant financial burden for society in the form of lost productivity and obvious costs like unemployment payments and related expenses. Indirect and social costs of unemployment may run even higher. For instance, unemployment is believed to contribute to poverty, crime, alcoholism, mental illness, and a variety of other social ills (Nietzel, Winett, MacDonald, & Davidson, 1977). Thus, in some senses, remedies for unemployment can be considered true primary prevention.

Unemployment is a complex social problem driven by economic, political, social/behavioral, and other forces. It is and will continue to be a fertile area for small- and large-scale intervention by the federal government and other agents of society. However, these efforts have often met with mixed, if not disappointing, results (Cook, Adams, & Rawlings, 1985; Mirengoff, Rindler, Greenspan, & Harris, 1982; Robson, 1984). Perhaps the lowest common denominator in all employment assistance efforts are the job search programs directed towards enhancing the match between a person's available skills and those demanded by the labor market. These programs, while only one small piece in the jigsaw puzzle of policy and programmatic responses to unemployment, have a good potential for reducing unemployment and the number of job search dropouts among high-risk groups and thus serve as a rich area for social science research. Below we discuss some of the recent developments relating to these programs.

THE SELECTIVE PLACEMENT APPROACH

Historically, providers of job-finding assistance conceptualized the process of matching available labor with job openings in a very mechanistic fashion. Difficulties in finding a job were viewed as primarily due to lack of accurate and timely information about job openings. As a consequence, most providers, including state employment security offices and vocational rehabilitation programs, subscribed to a selective placement model. In this model, a job counselor, armed with information about job openings, assumed primary responsibility for a client's job placement. However, research indi-

cates this simplistic expert-based approach to job finding is not very effective (Parnes, Miljus, Spitz, & Associates, 1969). In fact, there is growing consensus that selective placement fails, in large part, because it takes away client initiative, independence, and self-confidence (Zandy & James, 1977).

THE CLIENT-CENTERED PLACEMENT ALTERNATIVE

Social scientists and providers of job-finding assistance have begun to conceptualize the job-finding process in a more wholistic fashion. Increasingly, they have recognized that success in finding a job is mediated by a constellation of personal factors that define job search competence (e.g., Associates for Research in Behavior, 1973). This reconceptualization of the job-finding process and a recognition of the shortcomings of expert-based job placement services led to the development of "client-centered" job placement approaches (Salmone, 1971).

Job placement models fitting the client-centered definition stress empowering individuals, particularly marginal labor force participants, to become more competent job seekers. These approaches are learning-based interventions of varying complexity and comprehensiveness that focus on performance in the job-finding role. In some respects, client-centered placement models can also be thought of as professionally assisted self-help/mutual help models. More important, there is growing evidence that several forms of client-centered job-finding assistance are more effective and less expensive than traditional placement services.

Research on Client-Centered Job Seeking Programs

Research on relatively simple forms of client-centered placement assistance, which primarily involved encouragement and provision of knowledge about sources of job leads and job-seeking techniques via written material, has shown surprisingly positive results. For instance, Ugland (1977) provided some vocational rehabilitation clients with a set of "job seekers aids" (informal job-seeking instructions plus a written job search plan-of-action detailing likely employers and names of personnel directors to contact) and found that they obtained significantly more jobs than a services-as-usual control group. In an experimental study, Keith (1976), also using a hard-to-place population of vocational rehabilitation clients, provided his experimental group with a programmed learning manual which covered job-seeking skills; these individuals also obtained significantly more jobs than control subjects.

The group-format job club program, developed by Azrin, Philip, Barch, and Besalel-Azrin (1978), is probably the most complex and perhaps most well-known client-centered job placement model. It incorporates learning techniques, including modeling, role playing, social reinforcement, feedback and instruction, as well as mutual help and support group principles usually found in self-help models, to effect behavioral, attitudinal and motivational change. Recommended program implementation involves highly structured daily training and job-seeking sessions (Azrin & Besalel, 1981).

A large-scale experimental evaluation of the job club (Azrin et al., 1978) involving almost 1,000 welfare-eligible (WIN) clients in five cities, as well as an earlier experimental study (Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975), demonstrated that significantly more job club participants (in some cases three times as many as controls) found jobs. It should be noted, however, that the job club was not effective with Spanish-speaking clients and that certain hard-to-place subgroups (see the discussion of older job seekers below) were not represented in this study.

Summary

By most standards, research on client-centered job-seeking models has been rigorous and appears to portary these approaches as effective alternatives to expensive traditional placement services. However, from an ESI perspective many important questions about the client-centered approach remain unanswered. For theoretical as well as practical reasons, additional research is needed on the following issues:

Relative Effectiveness of Treatments. Positive results were obtained with very simple (job seeker's aides; programmed learning manual) and very comprehensive/complex (job club) operationalizations of client-centered job placement. What is the relative effectiveness and cost effectiveness of these and other model variations?

Program Processes. The existing research sheds little light on how (through what processes) these programs work. Process information would assist attempts to refine these models.

Generalizability of Treatment Effects. The job club was not effective with Spanish-speaking clients. What is the generalizability of client-centered models to untested subgroups who are also high-risk for unemployment?

Interactions Between Variables. Interactions of treatment with other variables (setting, local unemployment, etc.) are unknown.

In the two studies described below we attempt to answer these and other questions by pursuing an ESI strategy.

STUDY 1: JOB CLUB OUTCOME AND PROCESS WITH OLDER JOB SEEKERS

Older people are believed to be particularly vulnerable to the financial and psychosocial repercussions of unemployment (National Council on Aging, 1975). However, society has been slow to respond to their needs (Schram & Osten, 1978), in large part, because the unemployment problems of older people are not substantiated by official unemployment figures.

Although there is long-standing evidence that older workers are almost twice as likely to experience long-term unemployment as younger workers (Rones, 1983), aggregate unemployment rates for older people are relatively low. However, this is probably because official unemployment figures do not include the large numbers of older discouraged job seekers (individuals who want to work but have stopped looking for a job) (Kreps, 1966), reluctant and involuntary retirees (Bould, 1980), and the growing number of retirees who would like to work part-time (Robinson & Sanford, 1983).

Thus, although not well publicized, there is substantial reason to believe that there is a significant, but somewhat invisible, older worker problem. Since client-centered models had never been evaluated with this population, older people represented an important and logical group to study in extending the generalizability of client-centered placement programs to other high-risk groups. In this vein, the study described below had two major objectives: (a) To test the effectiveness of an abbreviated form of the job club with a new population—older job seekers (although we summarize these findings below they have been reported in detail by Gray, 1983); (b) To gain a better understanding of the program's instrumental processes.

Method

Setting

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the job club model with older workers, a new service, the Older Worker-Retiree Employment Services (OWRES), was established. This program was sponsored by the local Area Agency on Aging, and was run through the senior center in an industrial Midwestern city (population: approximately 200,000). At the time the study was conducted (1979–80), local unemployment rates were high (10%) and well above national rates (7 to 8%).

Design and Procedures

The research design for the study was a two-group (job club and control) experiment with repeated measures. Participants were matched into pairs

based on order of intake and eligibility for subsidized employment before being randomly assigned to the two conditions. The matching procedure was used to help insure equivalent groups. The premeasure (P) interview occurred 1 week before participants began receiving assistance. Follow-up assessments occurred at 4 weeks (F1), 8 weeks (F2), and 12 weeks (F3) after P. All assessments except the final follow-up (F3) were personal interviews completed in the participants home; F3 was a telephone interview.

In order to receive assistance from the OWRES and become eligible for the study individuals had to be 50 years of age or older, to reside in the local catchment area, and to be currently unemployed. Forty-eight individuals were assigned to the two conditions (each cell, $N = 24$). One participant died during the study; data from this individual and the matched pair were not analyzed (total $N = 46$).

Participants

Study participants had the following characteristics: 44% were male, 56% were female, 48% were 50-62 years of age, 52% were 63 or older; 85% were Caucasian; approximately one-third had held manual or unskilled jobs, another third had held skilled or clerical jobs, and the remaining third had held managerial or professional jobs in the past; and 39% considered themselves retired. There were no statistically significant demographic differences between the job club and the control group.

Conditions

The Experimental Condition: The Job Club. Primarily because of resource limitations, participants experienced an abbreviated operationalization of the job club (4 hours per week versus 20+ hours per week) which involved only a few of the many techniques and procedures recommended by Azrin and Besalel (1981). Participants attended biweekly 2-hour meetings conducted by the researcher. Each session involved instruction (lecture, discussion, and/or practice) in a particular job search technique or area (e.g., locating job leads, writing resumes, conducting interviews). Subsequently, participants actually engaged in job search activities such as constructing their resumes or making "cold calls" to employers to obtain job lead information. Each participant was also given a manual containing information that paralleled the material discussed during job club meetings. A critical component of each meeting was the goal setting and review procedure. During each session, participants publicly set job search goals to be accomplished by the next meeting (number of cold calls, number of resumes to hand out, etc.). These goals were then reviewed at the subsequent meeting. This procedure helped structure the individuals's job search and facilitated exchange

of information and job leads among participants; it also provided opportunities for recognizing and rewarding efforts, and for expressions of mutual support.

The Control Condition: Services-as-Usual. For ethical and practical reasons, normally available services, rather than a no-treatment group, was chosen as the control condition in this study. Control participants received job-finding assistance from the local state-run employment services. Although this office tended to follow the selective placement model, it also offered special assistance in the form of an older-worker specialist (Anderson & Fine, 1978). Thus, the amount of assistance offered by this office was probably greater and more personalized than the placement services offered older people in most settings.

Measures

The outcome measures were designed to assess the effectiveness of the two conditions in helping older job seekers find jobs (Objective 1) and to determine important characteristics of the job obtained. Outcome measures included job placement (placed during the entire follow-up period: yes/no), employment (employment status at each assessment—a measure of job maintenance), income earned, and hours worked.

Thus, in order to gain a better understanding of how the job club worked (Objective 2), process measures were also developed and included in the assessment battery. Several process measures focused on behavioral or social learning processes that were believed to contribute to the job club's effectiveness, including a knowledge (about job seeking) scale, used to assess knowledge of job search methods and techniques (mean α = .65); a set of job search activity/day items (e.g., hours spent/day, number of contacts/day, etc.), used to assess the amount and intensity of job seeking activity; and a job search expectations scale, used to assess the expectations of success or failure in the job search (mean α = .69). On a more exploratory basis, mutual help aspects of the job club were assessed via a job search network measure (the number of people participants felt were helping them find a job). Finally, an open-ended question was used to allow the participants to describe the program experience in their own words.

Results

Outcome Measures

Outcome results have been reported in detail (Gray, 1983) and are summarized here.

Placement (placed or not placed during the 12-week) follow-up period) was evaluated by chi-square analysis. Results indicated that significantly more job club participants (83%) found jobs during the study than control participants (26%), $\chi^2(1) = 14.81$, $p < .0001$.

Employment was analyzed by a 2 (Job Club vs. Control) by 3 (Fl vs. F2 vs. F3) analysis of variance with repeated measures. This analysis revealed significant main effects for condition ($p < .0005$, $\omega^2 = .19$) and for time ($p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .05$). Scheffé post hoc comparisons indicated that job club employment rates increased during each follow-up (control rates did not increase) and were significantly higer than control rates at each assessment period. By F3, 74% of job club and 22% of control participants were still employed. Not surprisingly, given these findings, job club participants also exhibited significantly higher income ($p < .05$, $\omega^2 = .08$) and hours worked ($p < .009$, $\omega^2 = .10$) than their control counterparts. No significant condition by subject variable interactions were observed.

Process Measures

In order to assess the relationship between each process measure and finding a job, a dichotomous measure, Success–Failure, based on the placement variable (placed or never placed in a job) was created.[4] Process measures were analyzed using a 2 (Job Club vs. Control) by 3 (P vs. Fl vs. F2) by 2 (Success vs. Failure) repeated measures design. Since multivariate analysis of variance on process measures was consistent with univariate comparisons, only the latter are reported here.

Analyses for job search expectations and for job search activities/day failed to reveal any significant main effects or interactions.[5]

As Table I reveals, the ANOVA for the knowledge (about job seeking) scale shows a significant Condition × Time interaction. Post hoc comparisons revealed that job club–Success participants significantly increased their knowledge from P to F1 and from P to F2 and exhibited significantly higher knowledge during the combined follow-up period (F1 and F2) than all other groups. Thus, job club participants who found jobs had increased their job-seeking knowledge since P.

[4]Although the distribution of this variable across conditions is unbalanced (job club–success, $N = 18$; job club–Failure, $N = 4$; control-Success, $N = 6$; control-Failure, $N = 15$) and the resulting ANOVAs are only approximate, post hoc comparisons are accurate.

[5]It should be noted that analysis of "job search activity/day" measures was complicated by the the fact that once a participant finds a job they stop job seeking. In order to avoid losing participants who find jobs in the repeated-measures analyses, data were analyzed for the combined follow-up period (or until job placement caused one to stop searching). While this seemed the best option among several poor alternatives, we were not certain the importance of job search activity has been adequately tested in this study.

Table I. Group Means and ANOVA Significance Levels for Knowledge and Job Search Network

			Group means			ANOVA						
Variable	Condition		P	F1	F2	A	B	C	A × B	A × C	B × C	A × B × C
Knowledge	Job club	Failure	18.00	18.75	18.75	ns	ns	ns	ns	.03	ns	ns
		Success	20.27	22.60	22.77							
	Control	Failure	19.73	19.50	19.60							
		Success	20.16	19.66	18.83							
Job search network	Job club	Failure	1.50	3.75	2.25	ns	ns	.0005	ns	.01	ns	ns
		Success	1.50	3.61	3.05							
	Control	Failure	1.33	1.53	1.73							
		Success	1.50	2.00	1.83							

As Table I reveals, the ANOVA for the job search network measure shows the main effects for time and the interaction of Condition × Time were significant (the main effect for condition was nearly significant). Scheffé comparisions indicated that job club participants reported a significantly larger job search network at F1 and during the combined follow-up period (F1 and F2) than controls. Job club participants also exhibited a significant increase in their network between P and F1 and a significant decline between F1 and F2. However, this decline was significant only for job club–Failure participants. (Subsequent analyses revealed that most job club–Failure participants never attended meetings or quickly terminated attendance.) In spite of the reduction between F1 and F2, the network reported by job club participants at F2 is still significantly larger than the one they reported at P. This difference may be noteworthy since many job club participants responded to open-ended questions about the program by stressing the importance of the emotional and other support they received and gave to others while they were members of the job club.

Discussion

The current study adds to the evidence that the job club is superior to traditional job placement services. The effectiveness of the job club is underscored by the fact that placement rates in the job condition at Week 4 (39%) were higher than those attained by controls after 12 weeks (26%). These findings also lend support to the effectiveness of an abbreviated, less comprehensive form of the job club program and extend the generalizability of the model's effects to a population of older job seekers.

Process findings are much more complex and much less definitive but provide the basis for some interesting insights into the mechanisms that apparently contribute to the job club's potent effects. For instance, these findings provide qualified support for both learning-based and helping network-based hypotheses about the program's instrumental processes. They reveal that job club participants acquired more job search knowledge and reported larger job search networks than controls. However, our data failed to confirm the belief that job club participants increase their expectations of job search success or engage in more job seeking than their control counterparts (although this comparison was complicated by the quickness with which job club participants found jobs and thus terminated their job search).

The overwhelming success of the job club (83% placed after 12 weeks) makes it difficult to use within-program comparison to confidently distinguish instrumental and noninstrumental processes. Nonetheless, our findings reveal that only job club–Success participants increased their job search knowledge and reported sustained increases in their job search network. Pro-

gram records indicated many job club–Failure participants quickly stopped attending meetings and probably never had an opportunity to derive these benefits from the program—a phenomenon noted by Azrin et al. (1978). Regardless, these findings appear to provide qualified support for the belief that the job club works because participants become more knowledgeable and thus more competent job seekers and because they acquire an expanded network of job search helpers.

At the same time, these findings raise some interesting questions about client-centered models in general and the importance of other program processes. For instance, if an abbreviated and less intense form of job club produced such dramatic results, might even simpler forms of client-centered assistance, like those used by Ugland (job seekers's aides) or Keith (programmed learning manual) produce comparable outcomes? Such approaches have several intrinsic advantages: they are less expensive (estimated at $5–20 vs. $80–200 per participant); they do not use a group format and therefore do not require a staff person trained to facilitate group process or scare off people intimidated by the group format (one explanation for why people drop out); they also can be used in sparsely populated rural areas (a major limitation of the job club). Fortuitously, comparison of an individually and a group-based form of assistance provides a unique opportunity to also examine the importance of social support processes on these models.

STUDY 2: A COMPARISON OF TWO CLIENT-CENTERED PLACEMENT MODELS

This study had two major goals: (a) To compare the relative effectiveness of the job club and a simpler individually based client-centered model; and (b) To gain a better understanding of the importance of social support within the job club.

Method

Setting

A local Council on Aging Senior Employment Program located in a moderately large Southeastern city (population approximately 184,000) served as the intervention site. Local unemployment rates were low (3–5%) throughout the course of the study.

Design and Procedures

The research design employed in the study was a two-group (job club and control) true experiment with repeated measures. As in Study 1, measures were made 1 week before treatment (P) and 4(F1), 8(F2), and 12(F3) weeks after P. P, Fl, F2, were personal interviews, whereas F3 was a telephone interview.

The registration intake and assignment to condition procedures were identical to those used in Study 1. However, participants had to be at least 55 years of age (compared to 50 years in Study 1) to qualify for assistance. During the course of the program, one participant from each group had to be dropped from the study for health-related reasons. Data from 35 participants (job club = 19; control = 16) were included in the final data analysis. (Cell Ns for the two conditions are unbalanced because the odd-numbered participant available from the three participant waves was assigned to the job club.)

The study population had the following characteristics: 71% were female, 29% were male; 71% were 55-62 years of age, 17% were 63-65, and 11% were over 65. Although the majority of participants had a high school diploma or less, one participant had a PhD. *T* tests and chi-square procedures for various demographic variables such as income level, education, and status of previous employment indicated no significant differences between the two conditions.

Conditions

The Experimental Condition: The Job Club. Job club meetings were conducted as designed by Azrin et al. (1978) and as adapted for older workers by Gray (described above). This included use of a job club handbook.

Control Condition: Job Search Handbook. Job Search Handbook participants were encouraged to use all of the services normally provided through the Senior Employment Program, including job referrals and provision of information on employment available in the community (as were job club participants). Additionally, these individuals were given a job search assistance manual (paralleling that given the experimental group) covering job search techniques, sources of job leads, etc. We believe that this handbook was intermediate between Ugland's and Keith's materials in comprehensiveness and sophistication.

Measures

As in Study 1, the assessment instrument included both outcome measures and process measures. The outcome measures were designed to assess the job club's relative effectiveness in placing people in jobs and, as described above, included job placement (placed during the follow-up period: yes/no), employment (employment status at each assessment), income earned, and hours worked.

The knowledge (about job seeking) measure used in Study 1 was used as a manipulation check. Additionally, measures of perceived social support were used in Study 2 to help understand the extent to which social support process contributed to the effects of the job club. The primary techniques for assessing social support involved use of two instruments developed by Barrera (1981): The Inventory of Social Support Behaviors (ISSB) and the Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS).

Administration of the ISSB involved reading a list of helping behaviors to participants and asking them to rate the occurrence of these behaviors on a 5-point Likert-type scale with choices ranging from *not at all* (1) to *about every day* (5). Chronbach's coefficient alphas for this measure ranged from .90 to .94 across assessments.

The ASSIS contains structured questions on perceived support, received support, needed for support, and satisfaction with support in six functional areas: material assistance, physical assistance, intimate interaction, advice, positive feedback, and social participation. Only two subscales (perceived support and received support) exhibited adequate reliability to warrant use in the present study. The standardized coefficient alphas for the subscale, perceived support, varied from .66 to .86. For the received support subscale, reliability estimates ranged from .60 to .71 across the various assessments.

As in Study 1, a job search network measure was used. However, paralleling Barrera's ASSIS, the job search network measure asked participants to report available job search networks (perceived help) and helping job search networks (received help).

Results

Outcome Measures

Job club participants had a 94.7% job placement rate whereas the controls had a 38% placement rate, $\chi^2 = 10.68$, $p < .001$.

Table II presents the group means and significance levels for employment, income, and hours. As in Study 1, the composite variable, employment, was analyzed by a 2 (Job Club vs. Control) by 4 (P vs. F1 vs. F2 vs. F3)

Table II. Group Means and ANOVA Significance Levels for Outcome and Process Measures (Study 2)

		Group Means				ANOVA[a]		
Variable	Condition	P	F1	F2	F3[b]	A	B	A × B
Outcome measures								
Employment	Job club	0.11	0.31	0.79	0.89	.01	.01	.01
	Control	0.06	0.25	0.31	0.25			
Hours	Job club	1.95	19.47	59.78	100.05	ns	.01	.05
	Control	2.40	18.31	38.38	37.25			
Income	Job club	9.16	64.30	180.79	313.53	ns	.01	ns
	Control	4.94	67.13	132.37	140.87			
Process measures								
Knowledge	Job club	12.26	14.26	14.10	NA	ns	.005	ns
	Control	12.31	14.00	14.06	NA			
Job search network (available)	Job club	0.29	3.88	3.17	NA	.01	.01	.05
	Control	0.69	0.87	0.81	NA			
Job search network (helping)	Job club	0.76	2.88	2.47	NA	.05	.01	ns
	Control	0.31	0.81	0.69	NA			

[a]A = condition, B = time; $p <$ values shown.
[b]NA = not assessed.

repeated measures analysis of variance. Main effects for both Condition and Time were significant as well as Condition × Time interaction. Scheffé post hoc analyses indicated the job club means were significantly higher than control means at F2 and F3 but not at F1. In addition, employment for the job club participants increased significantly from F1 to F2 and from F2 to F3, whereas the controls showed significant increases only from P to F1. Nonetheless, unlike Study 1, controls, who in this case were using a job search handbook, approached the job club's employment gain during the first follow-up wave (F1). No significant condition by subject variable interactions were observed.

Since income and hours worked are a function of employment, it comes as little surprise that both groups also showed significant increases for these variables overtime. Time and Condition × Time interaction effects were obtained for hours worked. Scheffé analyses indicated that number of hours worked by job club subjects increased significantly for each assessment (P–F1, F1–F2, and F2–F3) whereas the job search handbook controls apparently leveled off, failing to show a significant increase after F2. In spite of a large apparent difference, no significant between conditions or condition by time differences were observed for income. The failure to reach significance appears to be due to a large within-group variance and the time delay between working and receipt of wages.

Process Measures

Process measures were analyzed by a 2 (Job Club vs. Control) by 3 (P vs. F1 vs. F2) repeated measures analysis of variance (lack of variance on the placement variable precluded the creation of a Success–Failure variable as was done in Study 1).

As Table II reveals, the only significant main effect for the knowledge (about job seeking) scale was for time with Scheffé post hoc analyses indicating the significant difference occurred from P to F1. No significant differences were obtained between conditions. Thus, unlike Study 1 participants in both conditions exhibited increased job search knowledge.

Significant main effects for both condition and time, as well as a Condition × Time interaction, were found for both the available job search networks and the helping job search network variables (see Table II). Post hoc analyses indicated no difference between the two groups at P but significant differences did occur at F1 and F2 with job club participants reporting more poeple available to help them with their job search. Similar differences were found for the helping job search network measure. Significant differences between the two groups and across time were found. Post hoc analyses once again indicated significant between-group differences at F1 and F2, with job club participants reporting more people helping them find jobs. In summary, job club participants, who were part of a mutual help group, perceived themselves to have more people available to help them look for a job; they also reported that more people were actually helping them with their job search. Social support was considered a potential explanation for the job club's success in helping people locate employment. Yet, in spite of reporting a larger job search network no significant differences, Condition (C), Time (T), or C × T, were indicated for social support as measured by Barrera's ISSB or ASSIS.

DISCUSSION

The current study constitutes a multiple treatment experiment involving two client-centered job-finding models. Previous research had supported the utility of both the group-based job club and various individually based models, which used written material, compared to traditional services. However, only the former had previously been tested with older job seekers. This study provides additional support for the effectiveness of the job club and indicates that it is superior to a job-seeking handbook intervention, at least for a population of older job seekers. Thus, in spite of cost and other considerations which appear to favor the job-seeking handbook approach, we cannot recommend the use of this approach with this population.

In addition, outcome and process findings from this study, along with findings from Study 1, appear to enrich our understanding of client-centered job-seeking programs. For instance, the current research indicates that both models appeared to be effective during the early stages of the job search. However, when unemployment persists (beyond 4 weeks) the abbreviated form of job club used in this experiment (and in Study 1) is considerably more effective than the job search handbook approach in facilitating employment among older job seekers. A closer examination of some of the trends observed for process measures may shed more light on these differences.

Results indicate participants in both conditions exhibit a significant increase in knowledge from P to F1 and remain stable thereafter. In light of the employment changes noted above (and the lack of change for controls in Study 1), it seems plausible that some participants in the job search handbook condition benefited relatively quickly from the simple provision of job search knowledge. However, apparently only the job club provided the kind of assistance needed when the job search drags on.

Attempting to explain the differential effectiveness of the two models was another objective of our efforts. We believed social support processes might operate in the job club and buffer participants from stress and frustration, thereby forestalling the "discouragement reaction" that is prevalent among older job seekers. This could account for the much better performance of job club participants after the first follow-up (4 weeks). However, our data provide only partial support for this hypothesis. Although job club participants once again reported larger available and helping job search networks, no significant differences were observed between the two conditions on the global measures of support (ISSB and ASSIS scales).

Because there are so many differences between the job club and the control conditon, it is difficult to say with certainty what processes actually account for the differential outcomes observed in this study. However, because social support remains a difficult and elusive phenomenon to operationalize and measure, it probably should be retained as a plausible explanation for these differences. In retrospect, our social support measures may have been too general to capture the task-specific social support that may be operative in the program. Thus, this may be one of those occasions where an off-the-shelf measure is inadequate to capture subtle changes.

SUMMARY

While client-centered job placement interventions are by no means a panacea (they seem certain to have little effect on structural unemployment—the largest form of unemployment), research indicates they can increase job placement and employment, particularly among various hard-to-place popu-

lations. However, optimizing the benefits to be derived from these models depends on a more refined understanding of with whom, under what circumstances, and how they work. In the current research, progress has been made in answering some of these questions. We have demonstrated the effectiveness of an abbreviated form of the job club and have extended the generalizability of its treatment effects to a previously untested, high-risk group (older job seekers), to a new setting (local senior centers) and under disparate rates of unemployment. We also failed to show the effectiveness of a simpler, less expensive, and in some ways, more readily transferable form of client-centered placement assistance. However, as a consequence, we may have gained enough insight into the workings of these models to help us engineer new or hybrid interventions that retain these characteristics and the job club's potent effects. We have raised many new questions about the theoretical basis and practical utility of client-centered job placement models and similar interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

The complexity of most social problems and a growing human services shortfall dictate that we reevaluate our approach to planned social change. Simplistic one-shot evaluations of social interventions are unlikely to yield the kind of information that will help us identify true social innovations, understand and refine their instrumental processes, and thereby optimize their effects. However, incremental progress in these areas is possible through the pursuit of ESI or other systematic and rigorous approaches to outcome research.

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