The procedures in this manual are meant to be used by agency staff, as part of the broader services they provide, or under supervision of agency staff.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Patricia and Ron, for without you none of this would be possible. Your strength and encouragement have guided me through the most difficult times. Thank you for constantly supporting me through every new step in life regardless of its extent.
Abstract

Employment is something that most people will have in common, however finding employment can be a difficult task for many youths. To assist youth with finding and retaining jobs, pre-employment services, such as the Youth Job Connection (YJC) program, provide necessary workplace skills. Implementation of effective feedback has been shown to improve job performance. However, there is a gap in the literature with regards to testing the effectiveness of feedback with youth in pre-employment training, and for entry-level jobs such as customer service. Such feedback is often experienced as threatening. Due to the potentially confrontational nature of feedback, it tends to be avoided in the workplace. YJC participants were often observed responding to feedback by displaying defensive, panicked, or anxious behaviours. The goal of the thesis was to use research, and direct observations to observe how youth interpret feedback, and present information based on these findings to develop a solution. A task analysis was used to develop a manual that provides youth in the YJC program with the information and skill steps to appropriately accept and respond to on-the-job feedback. The availability of a manual as a resource for YJC participants should increase their ability to understand the purpose of feedback and respond to it appropriately by improving their work performance.
Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to acknowledge my sister Sage, who has continuously been one of the biggest supports throughout my life. Sage, you truly are one of my best friends and I do not know how I could have survived these last four years without you. Your patience and guidance with me are a constant reminder to continue to push myself past my expectations of myself.

A special thank you to given to my grandparents Velma and Angelo for always being there for me, and helping with the first six years of my education. To Mr. Pascoe, my grade six teacher, who pushed me to work on things independently, and taught me to be in control of my life in order to succeed. Without these individuals, my education would not be possible.

I would like to thank my college supervisor, Christian Keresztes, for his hard work and dedication towards my thesis during this time. Christian, you were always there to answer my questions and complete multiple revisions without question. Your guidance has taught me how to become a better writer and be proud of the work I produce.

I would like to thank the whole YJC team, especially my field supervisor Patricia O’Connor, for accepting me so gracefully into your agency as a part of your own. The wisdom and knowledge you have taught me about the field will be carried to future endeavors.

To my beautiful friends, Sabrina, Heather, and Ashlee, who have been there for me through laughs, tears, fears, and complaints, not only over the last four years, but throughout our friendship. The three of you are family to me and I would not be the woman I am today without your love and support.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge The 1975, for helping me appreciate music, love, and myself again at a period where I felt I hit bottom.

"It’s a wonderful, wonderful"
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Chapter I: Introduction

At one point in most people’s lives, they will experience the same event called employment, regardless of pay, age, social class, or education. However, finding a job and maintaining it is not the easiest task, especially for youth. For those youth who struggle to find, secure, and maintain employment, there are pre-employment training programs put in place to assist with work-life transition. KEYS Job Centre offers the Youth Job Connection Program (YJC), which is a three-week pre-employment training where youth between the ages of 15 and 29 can learn basic workplace skills and build confidence needed when entering the workforce. Participants in the YJC program have had little or no working experience, such that they often lack essential working skills such as communication and working with others. The aim of the YJC program is to prepare youth for the workforce by teaching them new skills and increasing their work abilities, as well coaching participants in applying for the type of work of their interest. The YJC program offers structured group activities, a one-day job search, and a one-day job trial. The job trial day includes feedback given by management at worksite on the work each participant performed. This feedback is then given to the participants so that they can understand and learn from their work performance.

A common aspect of having a job is receiving feedback, either from customers, other employees, or the employer. Feedback can be defined as a reaction to an individual’s performance of a task (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2018). However, being able to accept and implement feedback is a skill that some individuals lack, because as human beings we do not want to hear we are not completing work to our fullest potential. Being able to accept feedback and improve work performance are essential skills in maintaining job success, satisfaction, and confidence. Performance feedback is an on-going process that is usually given in verbal form by a supervisor or by management, and often includes information regarding the expected and exhibited behaviours/performace (Cipani & Schock, 2011). Employees may also undergo performance appraisals where the feedback session is documented and recorded (Cipani & Schock, 2011). Feedback can often be seen as a threat, as it creates emotional challenges for the individual accepting the feedback (Clark, 2018). Many, if not most have difficulty accepting feedback because they feel shame or embarrassment about their work performance. However, individuals who fear rejection, conflict, relationships, or being hurt may be at higher risk of reacting negatively to feedback (Clark, 2018). If an individual feels threatened by feedback, it can impact the way they perceive themselves, and the work they are performing.

Given YJC participants’ lack work experience, it can be suggested that they have little or no experience with feedback. Upon acceptance into the program, youth are assessed for risk factors that can create barriers to job success, such as: high school attainment, income level, mental health, family/household circumstances, hardships based on life events, and disabilities (physical, emotional, or learning). Given these barriers, it is likely that the majority of feedback received has been negative. This can lead to youths not feeling comfortable with feedback and wanting to challenge the individual giving the feedback. This was observed by both the placement student and program staff in many feedback sessions with participants. Feedback was given regarding numerous behaviours such as classroom etiquette, professional dress, language, and general feedback about performance. The participants often reacted negatively, becoming defensive, as shown by crying, getting angry, throwing a fit, walking away, talking back, swearing, and denial. Youth do not understand that being given feedback is not an attack on them personally, but rather a comment about their work performance. Feedback can help youth
improve on their work skills and understand what they need to change in order to succeed. If a youth reacts defensively in the workplace, that youth is less likely to have continued success.

Due to the YJC clients’ lack of knowledge and understanding of feedback, and a lack of resources or materials on feedback, this topic was chosen for the manual. The main purpose of the manual was to educate participants on how to cope more constructively and productively to the negative reactions to feedback and learn to replace them with knowledge and understanding of the importance of feedback on job performance. The need for such a manual was shown through observations of the group setting, individual conversations, and feedback sessions with participants. Based on the barriers and lack of work experience that these youth face, it is necessary to teach them how to accept and implement feedback, as they will enter job placements following successful completion of the program. This method was chosen given the short length of groups within the program and the curriculum already in place. Based on Industrial (work) Psychology and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) theories, an adaptation of a task analysis should be a useful way to deliver how to accept and implement feedback professionally in the workforce. When this information is provided, individuals will better understand why feedback is important, and how choosing to implement change can help them improve performance and increase confidence. As well, this skill can change how the employer views the employee, which can be of benefit to the employee. Being able to accept and implement feedback shows the employer that the employee is willing to work, improve and generally cares about their performance. When an employer has a positive view of an employee it can lead to, more shifts, better hours, and a greater possibility of receiving a promotion. Once participants enter the workforce, they need to understand that their negative behaviours will not be tolerated, and they will have to adapt to the environment they are in.

**Overview of the YJC Program**

The program is offered to unemployed youth aged 15 to 29 who face significant barriers to job success. The program runs once a month for three weeks from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and contains an average of 8-20 participants. The YJC programs has two group facilitators, and two job developers to offer their assistance and expertise to participants. Each participant who wishes to join the program must send in a resume during the assessment period and are phoned-screened for suitability. Facilitators search resumes for youth with no high school diploma, minimal job experience, poor work retention, and/or need help with their resume and job search. Applicants who may be excluded have long periods of employment, college/university degrees, good resumes, or have sound careers. Phone-screening questions include age, most recent work experience, school status, and potential job ideas. The facilitator can then book the individual for an assessment where barriers to their job success can be better explained. Youth may also be referred into the program from a variety of community partners such as educational services. Once a participant has completed an assessment, they will be accepted to the program based on their responses, and their eligibility based on program guidelines.

Several areas and topics are covered during the program to ensure that participants have a full understanding of the workforce and feel confident when entering it. Topics that are discussed include: personality characteristics, coping mechanisms, conflict styles, resume skills, interview skills, work behaviours/appropriate dress, and focuses on job-based goals. The program also includes an interview clothes shopping day, grocery store/budgeting challenge, job search job, and a one-day job placement. Participants also receive certifications such as service excellence, and workers heath and safety. Participants receive one-on-one support where they discuss their progress in the group, and how to further their learning. During these one-on-one session’s
participants may confined in a facilitator and seek help in multiple areas of life excluding employment.

**Rationale**

When feedback is implemented and applied, the hope is that individuals will have better work performance, success, and become able to grow in the workforce. Therefore, providing education on feedback and success with the use of an adapted task analysis to break down steps of accepting feedback should improve working relationships with managers and co-workers, and increase work performance, and job retention. Without the proper implementation of feedback participants will not grow or change in the work force and will experience the same level of success as they were before entering the program.

**Thesis Chapters**

The thesis includes five chapters. The literature will discuss youth unemployment, feedback, and uses of task analysis. The methods section will describe the target users, design, and manual content. The results section will provide the completed self-guided manual on how to accept and implement feedback in the workplace. Lastly, the discussion section will provide contributions to the field, and propose ideas for further implementation.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review examines youth unemployment, feedback, and task analysis to gain a better understanding of these topics in relation to each other. As the target users of this manual were youth in a pre-employment training program, it is important to understand how youth become unemployed, so that creating a plan for change would be effective. Several meta-analyses and chase studies have shown that feedback is worthwhile to employees, and when given and discussed regularly, employees enjoy their work life more. Task analyses are briefly discussed to give examples of their use and how they work in relation to this population. This population in specific considers feedback to be a threatening and shaming experience, and react to it impulsively, which was observed through engaging with multiple groups throughout the study.

Youth Unemployment

According to Statistics Canada (2018), 18.4 million people over the age of 15 were unemployed in 2017, of whom 2.45 million were youth between the ages of 15 and 24. The rate of unemployment amongst youth is 68% higher than among people over the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2018). This raises the question of whether youth choose not to work for various reasons or whether they encounter more barriers to employment. Youth unemployment is prominent in many societies, but there is little research as to the factors that influence it. Hällsten, Edling, and Rydgren (2017) reviewed and analyzed the data from the 2009 Social Capital and Labor Market Integration telephone interview/survey in Sweden, with a sample of 2942 respondents (Hällsten, Edling, & Rydgren, 2017). Youth who were at risk of unemployment due to school attendance were selected as a focus for the study (Hällsten, Edling, & Rydgren, 2017). Hällsten, et al., were interested in finding out whether having unemployed friends was associated with being unemployed. A large proportion of unemployed individuals, 45%, had one or more unemployed friends. Given these findings, social networks can be shown to either be a facilitator of or a barrier to employment. Surrounding oneself with a positive social network such as friends who are employed, in school, and have family/friend support, will increase the likelihood of employment. However, if the social network is unemployed, not in school, or does not have good family/friend support, it could result in unemployment for the youth. In addition to Hällsten et al., findings, Ose and Jensen (2017) found that the most common barriers to job success in youth were lack of motivation, opportunities, achievement, defeat, and not having proper knowledge of the work environment and the job market. This is a direct relation to the current study as these barriers are shown within the youth population of the YJC program. Although social factors are a big influence on youth unemployment, other areas needed to be considered as to why youth are unemployed.

Barriers to employment. In looking at predictors of employment in data from 950,000 unemployed youth in the UK, the Office for National Statistics UK found three factors to be strong predictors of whether youth succeed in finding employment: (a) Qualifications, either not having the right qualifications for a job, or leaving a low-skilled job to gain qualifications for better jobs; (b) Job skills, leaving education earlier and entering the work force had higher ratings of job success, as compared to those who did not, meaning young people are able to gain the necessary job skills before entering a high-skill job; and (c), Duration of unemployment, youth who have been unemployed for longer than three months are less likely to regain employment (Carter, 2015). The length of time unemployed can have negative effects on how a youth envisions working, applying for jobs, and how they will perform at a job in the
future (Ngai, Cheung, Yuan, & Lin, 2016). It is important to note that youth unemployment not only affects the youth themselves, but can affect everyone in society (Carter, 2015). Young people and their parents become anxious about the future; educators strive to give the youth the best education and preparation for working lives; as well, government aims to assist youth with the issues that they may face while unemployed (Carter, 2015). Unemployment can impair a youth’s social stability, as well as increase problems in financial, mental, and behavioural aspects in their life, making employment an important factor in a youth’s overall health, well-being, and socio-economic state (Ngai, et al., 2016). An important consideration is what drives a youth to choose (or not) to work, and what sort of motivation is required to find employment. Either or both of intrinsic motivation (internal forces) or extrinsic motivation (external demands) can energize a youth in finding and maintaining employment. Bénabou and Tirole (2003) state that with punishments and rewards in the work force it can weaken intrinsic motivation. This suggests that incentives are weakly reinforcing in short term, and internal reinforcers are more powerful in the long run (Bénabou & Tirole, 2003). This suggests that with a lack of intrinsic motivation a youth could be less likely to find employment. Regardless of the source of motivation, it can be challenging for youth to find the drive needed to seek employment.

Work motivation is defined as “rooted internal forces that determine the form, direction, length, and intensity of an individual’s behaviours at work” (Ngai, Cheung, & Yuan, 2016, p.3). The length of time unemployed was hypothesized as the most common factor in a youth finding employment and was found to have negative effects on motivation to seek employment (Ngai, et al., 2016). Lee, et al., (2017) conducted a study that determined the cognitive and clinical factors associated with not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in a sample of 163 youth between the ages of 15 and 25 with various mental illnesses. The participants were assessed on their functional status (ability to perform daily activities), along with clinical and neurological assessments twice within a 2-year period to determine the mental health and NEET status of participants (Lee, et al., 2017). At follow-up, 1 in 4 participants remained NEET. Having a lower cognitive functioning score during first assessment was the most common predictor of continued NEET status. This shows that those who are engaging in work or training with low levels of functioning still saw negative effects. Lee, et al., also found that when an individual presents as disengaged at work, school, or training, it can continue to influence their mental health status regardless of where they began in the study. These findings highlight the need to broaden academic and vocational training to gear towards assisting with mental illness and the need to collect assessments within these organizations (Lee, et al., 2017). There is a gap in how to assist these youths with both their mental health struggles and finding employment.

**Vocational training.** Gaining employment can be a difficult task for young persons who face all the barriers listed above. Often, such youth will need to sharpen both their hard (specific, and teachable) and soft (personality characteristics) skills in in order to be successful in a job (Ngai, Cheung, & Yuan, 2016). Vocational training offered through employment services outside of work or school can help to teach youth the skills they need to maintain employment (Ngai, et al., 2016). A study by Ngai, et al., (2016) focused on the effects of vocational training and work motivation on 209 youth aged 17-30 in China. Work motivation was assessed using a Likert scale rating of behaviours and meanings expressed a month prior to the study; this assessment focused on the internal work forces such as “working was the best choice” or “working made me feel more confident” (Ngai, et al., 2016). Training was assessed through observations of on-site training and a 7-item self-assessment that measured how the training
affected the youths’ vocational, emotional, and interpersonal competence. In order to test the effect of training on work motivation, the authors compared the results of the original assessments to the post-study assessments. (Ngai, et al., 2016). Having employment training was found to increase motivation to find a job and securing it, as the training not only taught much-needed vocational skills, but also encouraged independence, and improved self-actualization (Ngai, et al., 2016). This study also demonstrated how both hard and soft skills are needed in finding success in employment (Ngai, et al., 2016). Unemployed young people who are more involved in vocational training are at higher advantage of job success, increasing experience, self-confidence, all whilst increasing work motivation and engagement (Ngai, et al., 2016). Youth involved in a vocational training program are at an advantage over those who are not, because they are able to learn skills they may not otherwise. Vocational training teaches youth about workers’ rights, customer service skills, and confidence. Training offers the youth work experience without the fear of being at work and being judged if something were to go wrong. Vocational training assists those individuals who need extra help to master essential skills, however firsthand experience will tell that not every important area is covered during vocational training. Youth, like a lot of individuals, are not comfortable or familiar with the concept of feedback. Although feedback can appear to be frightening, it will always be present in the workplace and is rarely taught or spoken about as an essential skill.

Feedback

Feedback in the work force is the employer’s response to an employee’s work performance, and is concerned with the exactness, competence, and regularity of the decision or action in question (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010). An individual can receive feedback regarding a particular task, the way in which the task is being accomplished, or be directed at self-regulation, or even work ethic. Regardless of the form, feedback should be helpful in effecting behavioural change although this may not always be true (Norcini, 2010). A study by Kuvass, Buch, and Dysyik (2017), assessed the relationship between constructiveness and the immediacy and frequency of supervisor feedback. They found that the implementation of feedback was positively related to how well an employee performs in their job. Thorndike’s Law of Effect conceptualizes positive feedback like positive reinforcement, promoting positive behaviour outcomes and repetition of good behaviour, whereas negative feedback is similar to negative reinforcement as it punishes the inappropriate behaviours (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010). Negative feedback can either lead to employees giving up or trying harder. In contrast, when receiving positive feedback, employees can often keep their behaviours the same or increase their efforts (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010).

However, both positive and negative feedback can be taken as a negative experience. Feedback can be experienced as threaten as it can bring up negative emotions such as shame, embarrassment, or guilt. Embarrassment is exhibited when other individuals’ perceptions do not match what is trying to be expressed, but it often does not last long (Brandt, 2018). Guilt can stem from the feelings of breaking societies expectations, and individuals’ morals, guilt can last longer but often decrease once the situation has been reconciled (Brant, 2018). However, shame is often confused with guilt and embarrassment as shame can last a lifetime (Brandt, 2018). There is not one thing that can cause shame but an accumulation of continuous rumination on self-worth (Brandt, 2018). Shame can be felt when an individual feels powerless to change what it is in question and is often rooted in childhood due to a lack of validation of feelings (Brandt, 2018). Given the emotions that may be expressed during feedback it is important to consider the approach to how feedback is given.
If feedback is given in a constructive and positive way, it can have a greater effect on performance or behaviour change (O’Malley & Gregory, 2011). Negative feedback (telling an employee about the areas they need to improve) can direct an employee to set goals for themselves regarding behavioural change, and oftentimes motivate them to work harder (O’Malley & Gregory, 2011). For many people, negative feedback creates threatening perceptions that they then feel the need to challenge, and this can lead to them reacting in unprofessional ways that further strain their employment (O’Malley & Gregory, 2011). There is little research on how to help individuals with the shame and embarrassment they feel when receiving negative feedback. Nonetheless, it can be suggested that the first step is for the employee to become knowledgeable about the feedback process. It can also be suggested that the manager giving the employee feedback be certain to explain that the employee is valued and that the change in behaviours will be of benefit to everyone involved and the feedback is in no way a personal attack on the individual.

Benefits to feedback. Feedback has been stated as important, but how can feedback encourage and create behaviour change? Norcini (2010), reviewed the literature of over 500 meta-analyses including hundreds of thousands of studies, effect sizes and students, to complete his article. Norcini reviewed several studies and tested the effect of feedback in a medical setting with doctors. Of the studies he reviewed, 74% showed that feedback was positively related to desired doctor performance. Thus, when feedback was delivered appropriately and time was given to improve behaviour, the behaviours and work performance of doctors improved. Norcini also found that when feedback was used in combination with other interventions it was effective throughout 77% of the studies. Other interventions used included: reminders about expected work behaviours both visually and verbally, practicing the acceptance of feedback, and providing guidelines such as set rules to follow with regards to performance (Norcini, 2010). Another study by Ibrahim, MacPhail, Chadwick, and Jeffcott (2014), used 21 medical students in their first-year internship to assess the importance of feedback on their professional development. In this study the participants evaluate their own performance and were given performance appraisals following the medical code guidelines; qualitative data were then collected through surveys, self-directed audits, and interviews with the interns (Ibrahim, MacPhail, Chadwick, & Jeffcott, 2014). The findings underlined the necessity and impact of performance feedback for identifying strengths and weaknesses in performance (Ibrahim, et al., 2014). This study also provides evidence for the use of surveys and interviews to build in to evaluate the utility of feedback (Ibrahim, et al., 2014). The authors also found that developing a feedback system that works can be extremely difficult (Ibrahim, et al., 2014). This can become a problem in a variety of different settings, as each employment location needs to use a system that works for their requirements. While the studies listed above are in reference to medical students, conducted to test the effect of feedback on their performance, this shows that research is lacking on how to effectively give feedback in entry-level jobs. This raises the question of why feedback is not taken more seriously in entry-level jobs, as that is where most individuals will start in the work force.

While it is important to evaluate the employees a roll in feedback, it is equally as notable to review feedback from the employer’s perspective. Ansell and Lievens (2007) conducted a study to test how the feedback environment played a role on the long-term job satisfaction of 155 government employees in Belgium. Feedback environment was defined as the day-to-day supervisor roles, and the process through which feedback was given (Ansell & Lievens, 2007).
This study focused on a supervisor role, as it offered more opportunities for intervention. Ansell and Lievens collected data at two points of time. At the first point, a Feedback Environment Questionnaire asked several questions regarding the feedback process was given; 5 months later at second point, data regarding leadership were collected; these 2 questionnaires were compared in order to find the results of the study. This study found that when good support and feedback was given by supervisors, job satisfaction was higher at 5-month follow-up, showing that if there was no support or feedback, employee performance did not improve (Ansell & Lievens, 2007). Ansell and Lievens determined the usefulness of assessing the feedback environment; it also provided knowledge for a better understanding of the process of feedback. This study also demonstrated that when there is more support in the workplace, there are higher rates of positive outcomes, including better employer-employee relationships, and more opportunities for promotion within the workplace. Given these findings, it can be suggested that feedback assessments in the workplace should be studied more closely, as they play an important role in fostering employee motivation and job satisfaction. As feedback quality and the impact feedback can have both vary a lot, it can be extremely difficult to determine how to train employers on an appropriate way to give feedback. As well, it can be difficult to train employees on how to accept and implement that feedback.

How to accept feedback. Bailey and Burch (2010) outline seven steps to successfully receiving and implementing feedback: (a) Request it, (b) take notes, (c) listen and ask questions, (d) record that the feedback session occurred, (e) set goals, and (f) report back. Bailey and Burch state that the only way to understand one’s work performance is to ask. However, many do not ask for feedback of any kind. Once an employee has asked about their performance, they are in control of how they want to proceed with the information (Bailey & Burch, 2010). This can lead to an employee having to set goals for personal behaviour change. Slowiak and Nuetzman (2014) state that the combination of feedback and goal setting work better together than using the skills on their own, as an individual is able to hear the feedback and set a plan in place at the same time to achieve success. Given the wide range of ways in which feedback can be given, it is difficult to determine how exactly feedback should be provided in the workplace. It can be assumed that each individual workplace will need to create a feedback system that best works for them. It is important not only to accept feedback when given, but also to seek it out in order to become more aware of self and work performance. The information presented by Bailey and Burch is a foundation for teaching and learning feedback as a skill. Bailey and Burch essentially outline how to accept feedback and implement positive work change. By creating an adaptation of these steps for entry-level jobs, it is hoped that youth will be able to better accept feedback when it is given. A way of teaching new behaviours to individuals without necessarily needing to train them is task analysis, which is a breakdown of a task to make it easier understood (Snodgrass, Meadan-Kaplansky, Ostrosky, & Cheung (2017).

Task Analysis

Task analyses are most commonly used in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) training to assist children or adults with disabilities who struggle to learn tasks that require more than one step (Snodgrass, Meadan-Kaplansky, Ostrosky, and Cheung, 2017). A task analysis uses a process that breaks a task down into steps that can be easily understood and performed (Snodgrass, et a., 2017). Task analyses are most commonly used in classroom settings as well with individuals with disabilities in order to help children learn new behaviours, and with teachers providing positive feedback to students throughout the process of
the analysis in order to ensure that each step is moved through properly (Snodgrass, et al., 2017). Given the nature of the task analysis and the direction of change in human behaviour concepts of the analysis have been/ are changed in order to meet the needs of human work (Annett & Stanton, 2000). This means that task analysis must reflect both the current understanding of human behaviour and the information that needs to be learned and exhibited (Annett & Stanton, 2000). In order to change a task analysis, the behavioural concepts need to be eliminated and not focuses on the stimulus and response, but looking at cues, decisions, feedback, and knowledge of human performance or the task at hand (Annett & Stanton, 2000).

When an individual sets a performance goal for themselves, they are more likely to be successful in accepting feedback (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010). Annett and Stanton (2000) discuss a type of task analysis that allows for goal setting. Hierarchical task analysis (HTA) can be used to break down a task in any domain. Hierarchical can be defined as ranking in order. The main purpose of HTA is that the tasks an individual is trying to achieve are defined by goals they set for themselves over actions or steps of the analysis (Annett & Stanton, 2000). The HTA allows for each participant to explore the broken-down tasks by a ranking of goals on the expected performance and make plans in order to achieve that goal before moving onto secondary goals (Annett & Stanton, 2000). Another important component of the HTA is that the tasks are analyzed by breaking down a hierarchy of goals (Annett & Stanton, 2000). HTA will be used in the present study by the adaptation of Bailey and Burch’s feedback steps to include goal setting. By adapting the steps from Bailey and Burch to create a detailed task analysis by adapting all elements from various forms of task analysis, individuals can learn the required behaviour on their own and set goals for change. Once a task or behaviour is broken down into steps and explained, an individual can be expected to perform better on the task. Task analysis can be a useful tool in a variety of applications and settings but does not appear to have been used when it comes to providing feedback at work.

**Conclusion**

Research shows the unemployment rate is much higher among youth than adults (Statistics Canada, 2018). Social network and lack of schooling are shown to be barriers for youth unemployment (Hällsten, Edling, & Rydgren, 2017). As well job qualifications, job skill, and length of time unemployed can all be barriers to finding employment (Carter, 2015). For those individuals who have barriers to job success there are vocational training agency’s put into place and are shown to be effective in teaching youth job related skills. Feedback is an important job-related skill and can help to be effective in behaviour change (Norcini, 2010). However, many youths lack knowledge about accepting and responding to feedback on work performance, which can limit their ability to learn on the job and impair their work performance. Feedback is shown to be effective when it is delivered appropriately and timely after the behaviour is exhibited in order to change behaviour (Norcini, 2010). When feedback is effectively implemented in the work place, it can lead to increased intrinsic work motivation, better job performance and higher work satisfaction. However, much of the literature comes from Europe and China. There is a lack of comparable information from North American settings and entry-level jobs. This suggests that in North America, the importance of feedback has not been tested to be effective in all work platforms. By creating a task analysis using the concepts of Bailey and Burch’s steps to successful feedback, the hope is that youth and every individual in the workplace will be more knowledgeable and comfortable with feedback. The task analysis outlined step-by-step the process of accepting feedback by creating a hierarchy of what is the most important and moving onto secondary goals of the task (Annett & Stanton, 2000). If a
youth can learn to successfully accept feedback and implement behaviour changes before entering the workforce, it will assist individuals retain jobs, and find new ones.
Chapter III: Method

Consent to use Agency Name and Logo

The author obtained consent to use both the agency name (Appendix A) and agency logo (Appendix B) for the purpose and use of this thesis project and was signed by agency supervisor on December 11, 2018.

Target Users

The target users of this manual/task analysis are youth (of all sexes and genders) aged between 15 and 29 facing significant barriers to job success who are participants in Youth Job Connection (YJC), a paid pre-employment group-based setting who face barriers identified within the YJC program guidelines. These barriers to job success include: being indigenous, being a person with a disability (PWD), education attainment, essential skills, work experience, family household circumstance (low income area/household, no income, or little to no parental support), lone parent, homeless and housing, discrimination based on social identity (racialized or LGBTTQ +), mental health (including addictions) leaving care of child welfare, hardship based on life circumstances (criminalized or involved in justice system), and source of income. A participant does not need to meet all criteria, but enough to justify accepting them into the program. Participants much agree to attend the program full time, participate in one-day job placement, and engage in the group activities in order to receive payment.

Design

The manual was indented to provide youth in the YJC program with the skills and information needed to become comfortable with the process of feedback. This manual allows participants to have easy access to information regarding feedback. As the manual is self-guided the participants can read the manual however, they like, and use the information and task analysis. The format was selected based on the need addressed in the program and the availability of having a manual for the participants. Since feedback can be a sensitive topic, it would prove to be more effective if the youth are able to view the manual on their own. Observation of the group process suggested that feedback was a skill that all participants were lacking. The responses to feedback were often visibly negative, such as becoming defensive, aggressive, crying, or storming out of the room. As these groups are starting their journey into the working world, it can be suggested that the participants are not knowledgeable about the feedback process. Before they enter the work force, it will be important for them to understand and receive feedback in an appropriate manor. Accepting feedback appropriately includes behaviours like eye contact, asking questions regarding behaviour change, thanking the feedback giver for their time, and stating behaviour change goals. This manual will aid group participants in understanding feedback before they start working, giving them the opportunity to practice this skill as needed. When a participant receives feedback from a facilitator and they do not accept it in an appropriate way, then the facilitators can offer the manual to the individual for reference.

The manual was chosen as self-guided given the sensitive nature of feedback, and the responses shown by participants. As the manual is self-guided it is a tool that youth can take and use in the future within the program, job placements, and employment. If these skills can be developed during the pre-employment training, the participants will respond better when they receive feedback from an employer. This manual will also be a tool that facilitators can use to avoid any blow ups they might experience from a participant when they are giving feedback. Feedback is a skill that everyone can develop once knowledge and practice of the skill can be completed.
Manual Content

The manual consisted of five chapters. The first four chapters provide information about the importance and value of feedback, including a description of feedback, why it is important, how the success of feedback can affect job satisfaction/will to work, and include conclusions, suggestions, and recommendations. The chapter headings are as follows: (a) What is Feedback? (b) Why is Feedback Important? (c) Feedback is not a Threat, (d) What’s Next? (e) Receiving Negative Feedback. The final chapter of this manual focuses on the outline of the task analysis where the adaptation of Bailey and Burch’s seven steps to successful feedback was used. These steps were used along with grey literature on performance appraisals, to represent best practice for the targeted users. These steps are adapted for youth and divided into three sections (a) understanding negative emotions towards feedback, (b) how to effectively communicate in the workplace, and (c) goal setting. The chapters in the manual are one page in length and used lay language to be easily understood and relatable to the youth.

The goal of the manual was to create a resource for youth to use within the agency and in their work lives. The manual was developed for youth to read on their own and acquire the knowledge and understanding of the role feedback plays in employment. This resource is to be used as a self-guided teaching tool to understand the steps that are taken when given feedback in the workplace and to understand how feedback plays an important role in employment. The manual is well organized, and the youth can access any chapter they need at any given time. The manual will be left with the agency as a resource for future participants.
Chapter IV: Results

The Final Product

For youth to understand the feedback process and be able to accept and implement behaviour change in the workplace, the manual needed to be delivered in a way that would attract and hold their attention. The manual (Appendix C) can be given to the youth when a facilitator feels the youth could use the information, as well the youth will have access to the manual throughout the agency if they feel that they could benefit the knowledge.

The manual was printed in colour in a booklet format that includes a title page, and visual aids to grab the readers attention. The manual was written in 4 chapters that outline feedback, what feedback can do, how to perceive feedback positively, and give steps to receiving negative feedback. The manual also included brief information on how to deal with negative emotions, how to communicate effectively, and set goals.

Feedback and Changes

The draft manual was shown to the program facilitators for review and comment to ensure that it would be relevant, useful, and accessible. Feedback was collected verbally between facilitator and author during the placement period. The results were positive, and no criticism or changes were given.
Chapter V: Discussion

Summary

The purpose of the current thesis was to provide education and a task analysis on how to appropriately receive and implement feedback in the workplace for youth in a pre-employment training program. A gap in the literature was found regarding feedback, its importance, and its uses in entry-level jobs. The manual was developed to fill the gap of missing literature and provide a resource for youth on how to cope with receiving feedback. Given that YJC participants have little or no job experience, it can be argued that feedback is a necessary skill to acquire for retaining employment. The manual was useful as YJC participants and other young workers may not recognize the value of feedback in the workplace as an essential skill. Studies showed that when medical students/doctors were provided with feedback their work performance improved. With knowledge about the topic, youth may better understand feedback as a skill and develop a desire for change. As it cannot be change how feedback is given or deceived, youth can only increase the way they perceive it and accept and implement their behaviour change. Feedback is a skill that everyone can learn and use in the workplace. Many, if not all, young workers do not want to hear they are not performing as well as required. This can lead to a fear of feedback, as it can seem that the work is not done correctly. Although receiving feedback can be something that may seem threatening, it is crucial to success in any job. When feedback is implemented and applied, the hope is that individuals will have better work performance, success and become able to grow in the workforce. Therefore, providing education on feedback and success with the use of an adapted task analysis to break down steps of accepting feedback should improve working relationships with managers and co-workers, and increase work performance, and job retention.

Strengths

Two strengths of the manual are the format and readability. The manual was designed for youth to use as a resource on their own, by following the steps provided on how to receive and respond to feedback. The manual was written for them to easily understand, as well it includes colours and photos to grab the reader’s attention.

Another strength of the manual is that there was no resource like it in the YJC program or others like it. This manual provided youth with information in lay language and does not overwhelm with a large amount of information per page. In the receiving negative feedback chapter, it outlines how to deal with negative emotions feedback can bring up by giving examples on how to change emotions/thoughts. This is a strength as it does not have a confrontation value where youth discuss with other individuals.

Limitations

A challenge for the development of the manual was the lack of research on the use of feedback in non-professional environments such as customer service jobs. Due to this gap in research, finding materials and other resources for populations such as YJC was challenging. YJC clients often present a defensive attitude of lack of care for learning new skills or self-improvement. Another limitation of the study was that the manual was not implemented within the agency during the placement timeframe. Therefore, data was not collected on whether it would be an effective tool.

Multilevel Challenges

Client level. The main problem faced by the clients are that they are multi-barriered. It is difficult to pinpoint a single issue that could be causing a youth’s unemployment, which can be
due to a variety of different circumstances a client may be facing mental health issues, work history, a poorly written resume, or even personality characteristics. This becomes a difficult task, as the participants must seek a variety of agencies for assistance with school, shelter, counselling, and other needs.

Program Level. A challenge at the program level is that not all clients engage fully in the program or group activities. This can make it difficult for the program to run effectively and influence the youth the way the program is intended to.

Agency Level. The agency employees are there to assist YJC participants in their job search, but the clients often need help in other areas of their lives. The agency has certain resources to assist youth by sending them to other agencies, but it does not have the resources necessary to assist in every problem in the agency.

Societal Level. In order to be job-ready, participants must improve their skill set and show they are willing to seek help when they need it. If a participant is not job-ready, they are more likely to face social issues such as stigma, unemployment, and disconnection from others. If a youth does not find employment after the program, they may become discouraged. In turn, youth unemployment has an effect on society because the new generation is not contributing to the economy.

Contributions to the Behavioural Psychology Field

The manual contributes to the organizational behavioural management (OBM) field of ABA psychology and will provide an educational resource that can enhance employee learning in entry-level jobs. OBM uses procedures of ABA in order to help an agency with their mission, as well aids in evaluating work performance to change results (Cipani & Schock, 2011). Another important contribution the manual makes to the field of OBM deals with performance management which includes measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement of behaviours, and how important it is for organizations to give good feedback (Cipani & Schock, 2011). The need for this resource shows the importance of giving good feedback that is individualized for the people who are learning to hear and deal with feedback constructively. This manual was designed to assist with the performance of group members and employees with regards to feedback. This is showing that will education and tips on how to accept feedback that work performance can improve.

This manual was designed to address a gap in literature regarding the resources and use of feedback in the working environment. The manual will serve the purpose of a standalone resource that individual program participants can use to learn the skill of receiving feedback and responding constructively to it. Additionally, generalizing this tool to all job seekers would benefit the work force. As well, feedback can be benefit personal not just professionally as accepting feedback is a part of effective communication and have benefits on relationships in general.

The Behavioural Psychology field would benefit from using this manual as a teaching tool as it was not implemented during the placement time frame. Using this manual as a teaching tool instead of purely an independent resource would help to gather data collection on the effectiveness of the manual. This manual also makes a direct link to the field of Behavioural Psychology as its purpose is to assist individuals in bettering their lives. When an individual can accept feedback and change their behaviour, they will improve their work performance, thus increasing their employability in the job market and their ability to retain a job. For youth such as those in the YJC program, getting and keeping a job would mean a world of difference, and truly improve their lives.
Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, it is recommended to have the manual implemented and evaluated. In a group setting such as the YJC program the manual and the participants could benefit from the use of the task analysis portion of the manual as a teaching tool. Since the YJC has a large focus on improvisation the task analysis could be used in a role play feedback session in the workplace. By using the manual as a teaching tool, data can be collected in order to obtain results on the manual’s effectiveness. To calculate the effectiveness of the manual post training session, data would need to be collected at three points: baseline, in group feedback, and post group feedback. In order to do this, facilitators will give youth feedback in any area and document their reaction to it. After training the youth using the manual, the facilitator will simulate a similar feedback session and record the reaction to it. To collect data at the follow-up, a self-report questionnaire could be used to gather participants’ perspectives of how they used their feedback in the work force. Data at these three points would need to be compared to record findings and effectiveness. With the implementation of the manual as a teaching tool, youth continue to be able to practice the feedback skill in a controlled environment with trained staff who can assist them in any way they need.

A second recommendation would be to apply this manual in the context of the working-class environment (by referencing the working class such as those in entry-level jobs). As most existing research has been in managerial, technological, or medical fields, it would be beneficial to test this manual with entry-level jobs. Although these studies are beneficial to the overall factor that feedback is an important skill, it would be recommended to use this information in jobs such as customer service as that is where most youth begin work and collect data on the effectiveness of its use. Improving feedback skills in the context of entry-level jobs would benefit the working class as a whole. Feedback is a skill that can used in a variety of different contexts and if taught in these contexts, young workers will learn the skill at the start of their working life. If feedback can be accepted and implemented at early stages in employment, the skill can carry through to future jobs. Also, learning this skill at an early stage will assist in riding out harsh consequences or punishments that may be expressed through improper feedback acceptance. Once this skill is mastered early on, employees will be able to understand feedback at a young age and carry it throughout their work, and into their personal life as well.
References


Statistics Canada (2018). Employment and unemployment rate, annual, population centres and rural areas. [online] Available at: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410010601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=4.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=5.3

*All images found on Microsoft Word Icons*
Appendix A: Consent to Use Agency Name

Date: Dec. 11, 2018

Consent for Use of Agency Name

I, Patricia O'Connor, consent to the use of the name of KEYS Job Centre, Youth Job Connection in Haley Smith’s applied thesis for the Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology program at St. Lawrence College.

Patricia O’Connor
Agency Staff Signature

Haley Smith
Student Signature

PATRICIA O’CONNOR
Printed Name

Haley Smith
Printed Name
Appendix B: Consent to Use Agency Log

CONSENT FOR USE OF AGENCY LOGO

I, Patricia O'Connor, consent to the use of the logo of KEYS Job Centre in Haley Smith's applied thesis poster for the Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology program at St. Lawrence College.

Agency Staff Signature

Printed Name

Student Signature

Printed Name

LOGO

[REPLACE ST.LAWRENCE LOGO WITH YOUR AGENCY'S LOGO]
Accepting Feedback in The Workplace:

A Youth Manual on Appropriately Receiving
and Implementing Feedback in The Work Place

Developed by: Haley Smith

Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology

St. Lawrence College

2019
Layout

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Chapter 4: What’s next? ....................................................................................................7

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Purpose

- To educate readers about the importance of feedback in both the workplace and their everyday life.
- To prepare youth and those entering the working world on how to accept feedback and put in place a plan of action for moving forward.

Summary of Contents

- Chapter 1: What feedback is and its uses
- Chapter 2: Why feedback is important
- Chapter 3: Breaking down the negatives associated with feedback
- Chapter 4: Will outline next steps with the information provided
- Chapter 5: Will outline how to receive negative feedback

Who is this manual for?

- Youth ages 15-29 facing barriers to job success
- Anyone who needs extra help understanding and accepting feedback can read this manual as a source of information

Intended Uses

- This manual is intended to be read by oneself or used in a pre-employment setting to teach individuals about feedback and ways to accept and implement feedback professionally
What is feedback?

* Feedback is often given by management and includes areas of performance in which you can improve
* Feedback is an ongoing process and will be experienced in all jobs
* There are two kinds of feedback

Feedback is a reaction to a performance of a task.

Positive Feedback
Builds on strengths and praises good performance.

Negative Feedback
Points out what you are having trouble with and how to improve.
The Importance of Feedback

Feedback Can Improve

- Working relationships with managers and co-workers
- Work performance
- Keeping a job
- Motivation
- Listening skills

Feedback also

- Is always around us
- Helps to identify strengths and weaknesses
- Is a tool for continuous learning
- Prevents us from feeling stuck or discouraged
Feedback is NOT a Threat

Being given feedback means you are valuable to the ...
What’s Next?

Now you should be able to:

★ Define feedback

★ Understand the importance of feedback

★ Recognize that feedback is a normal part of any job: if you are not getting feedback, you should ask for it

Knowing the information is just the first step, but how can we apply this information in the real world?
Receiving Negative Feedback

When Given Negative Feedback

★ Having a one-on-one meeting with your manager can make you feel uncomfortable, and when emotions are high words may not be expressed carefully.

★ Feedback is a good way to express the good you are doing, as well as to define areas of improvement. But this negative feedback may be viewed as criticism, causes you to feel bitterness or demotivation, and improvements do not occur.

★ Feedback can confirm our worst fears or give reassurance on performance.

How to Deal with Difficult Feelings Experienced During Feedback

Common feelings following feedback:

Anger
“‘This isn’t fair’”

Defensive
“‘It wasn’t my fault, I wasn’t the only one who was doing it and I’m the one getting in trouble’”

Fear
“‘I’m going to lose my job’”

Shame
“‘it’s all my fault, that’s why this is happening’”
Understanding Feelings

1. Name the Feelings
   a. Notice your emotions, and what your body feels
   b. Be aware of feelings
   c. Don't hide emotions from yourself
   d. Don't blame something else
   e. Accept your emotions as a natural part of life

2. Express your Feelings
   a. Consider the best way to express your emotions
   b. Learn to change your mood by doing things you like and what makes you happy
   c. Focus on good in your life
   d. Seek support if needed

Once you can understand how you feel about the feedback, you can choose to change and improve your behaviour/performance or allow the negative feedback to control you.

Helpful Ways to Change Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>First Thought</th>
<th>Alternative Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Actually, company policies state that we need to do this”</td>
<td>“This isn’t fair”</td>
<td>“okay, I need to review the company policies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Break room is a mess, I cannot believe no one cleans up after themselves!”</td>
<td>“I wasn’t the only one who was doing it and I’m the one getting in trouble”</td>
<td>“I will clean up my mess, and make sure other staff members know to keep it clean”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Your till is 10 dollars short, I will have to write you up”</td>
<td>“I’m going to lose my job”</td>
<td>“Everyone makes mistakes, I will be more careful in the future”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to Communicate Effectively During Feedback

What Not to do

- Do not respond immediately
  - It is natural to react negatively to feedback, accept it and do not allow it to affect your work performance
  - If you need time to process or come up with a response, wait until you’re ready
- Do not become defensive
  - Take feedback as a learning experience
- Do not let it consume you
  - Nobody is perfect, everybody makes mistakes
- Do not ignore it
  - Feedback should be taken seriously and not be pushed to the side
- Do not take it personally
  - No one is out to get you, that kind of thinking will decrease motivation and morale
- Get angry or argue with the feedback
  - This will make things worse

Avoid These Statements:

- “It wasn't my fault”
- “But…”
  - Don’t make excuses
- “It was really a team effort”
  - Avoid placing blame on others
- “This isn't fair”
- “That's not part of my job description”
  - Going above and beyond every now and then never hurt
- “I know”
What to do

Listen and Ask Questions
- Be active in listening, by nodding your head, making eye contact, and looking interested in the conversation.
- Ask how you can improve, and what that should look like. It is important to understand the specifics about what you need to do differently and how.

Consider the Feedback
- Consider the situation and their point of view of your behaviour, do they match?
  - “I see your point, I guess I have done that before”

Make it a Conversation
- You are receiving information while stating your case
- Remind yourself to keep your negative emotions away
- This allows you to be in control of your work performance

Take Notes
- Write down what the employer tells you needs to be improved.
- This will show that you want to learn and accept the feedback, you can look back for reference of what needs to change.

Record That the Feedback Session Occurred
- Keep a note in your person files, or send your employer an email or text (whatever their preferred source is)
- Thank them for the feedback

Learn from the feedback
- Do a self-check: what do you need to improve? What can you do to improve? and how would you do it?

Thank them
- They are taking time to help improve your performance
- This shows that you understand the feedback and are looking forward to change
After the Feedback Session

Set Goals

• To set behaviour goals effectively after feedback, they must be
  o Clear and objective
  o Contributing to the company and managers expectations
• The expectations and responsibilities presented from the manager will be a guide in setting goals to address these concerns
• Consider discussing goals with your manager to ensure they are completed to their satisfaction.
• E.g. showing up late to work.
  o Long term goal: arrive to work 15 minutes early
  o Short term goal: set an alarm 15 minutes earlier

Make SMART goals

• Specific
  o Geared towards the end result
• Measurable
  o Can the manager see the behaviour that you are going to do?
• Achievable
  o Set goals that you can do
• Relevant
  o Make sure your goal relates to the performance feedback
• Timely
  o Create long term goal, and make short term goals to reach it

Report Back

• Once you have set goals, connect with your employer to share your goals for behaviour change.
• Set up another meeting a few weeks after the first feedback session to go over how your goals will help improve your performance