The JOBS Program: Impact on Job Seeker Motivation, Reemployment, and Mental Health

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Abstract and Keywords

JOBS is a research-based program delivered in a group format and designed to aid unemployed job seekers in their search for employment. The program has demonstrated positive impacts on job-search skills, motivation, reemployment rates, and mental health. The JOBS program was designed and tested in large-scale randomized trials at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. The positive effect of JOBS has been replicated in a number of national and international settings. Research, theory, and principles for best practice in the implementation of JOBS are discussed, as well as future directions for research and new applications.

Keywords: coping with unemployment, reemployment, job search, intervention, mental health, cost benefit

We are living in an era of global change comparable to earlier major social transitions marked by world wars and the Great Depression. These eras of transition have major impacts on individuals and on family life (Elder, 1995; Price, 1992). Dramatic economic, technological, and political changes are producing a wide range of transitions in working life, including involuntary job loss, forced retirement, and dramatically changed economic circumstances (Price, 2006; Price & Burgard, 2006, 2008). Job loss has well-documented multiple impacts on individuals, including depression, increases in family conflict and violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and family turmoil (Barling, 1990; Vinokur, 1997; see also in this volume Bambra & Eikemo, McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, Paul, Hassel, & Moser, and Sinfield).

In attempting to make the transition back to paid employment, job losers are faced with a set of critical challenges. They may have had no previous experience in job-search and may be unfamiliar with the critical skills required for success. Many may not have the capacity to identify their own marketable skills or to locate where these skills are sought in the marketplace. As commonplace as it may seem today, they may not have a ready ability to use their personal social networks effectively to identify job leads or mobilize support from others. Job losers may not have had experience making a convincing presentation of their credentials or know what might especially interest a prospective employer. None of these skills are taught in any standard school curriculum or in the workplace.

Some of these skills can be found in a handbook aimed at helping job seekers find new employment (Bolles, 2011). But even some familiarity with the needed skills will not be adequate unless the job seeker also has the knowledge and confidence to enact them and can rebound from the inevitable rejections and failures encountered during the job-search process.

These substantial job-search challenges are further compounded by the fact that many people experiencing job loss have had their confidence shaken or may even be mildly depressed. In addition they are often dealing with stresses and strains in family life that comes with job loss, including economic strain and disruption of familiar family roles and routines (Jahoda, 1982). Searching for a job inevitably involves many rejections and refusals before any glimpse of possible success can be seen. Therefore any effective program designed to aid unemployed people in the challenging and multifaceted task of job-search must not only focus on what job-search skills are needed but also offer them a safe and supportive learning environment where confidence as well as skills can be built. Since
job-search is an interpersonal and social process requiring the acquisition of unfamiliar new behaviors, there must also be opportunities for social modeling and active learning designed to fit the unique circumstances of the individual.

In this chapter we present the conceptual model and delivery protocol of the JOBS program, which is designed to help unemployed individuals gain paid employment. We also describe research on the JOBS program demonstrating its effectiveness and identify a number of factors that make it effective. We also report our experience in disseminating JOBS both in the United States and a number of international settings. Finally, we discuss future directions for research on JOBS, considering both applications to new populations and research aimed at identifying underlying social psychological principles that make programs like JOBS effective.

The JOBS Model

Transitions, including the experience of job loss, are almost always times of elevated risk (Elder and O’ Rand, 1995). They are also natural opportunities for prevention programs that support people experiencing a risky transition. Our program of research on job loss was motivated by our sense that helping people navigate these transitions could contribute in useful ways to their lives and well-being. The program grew out of programs of research on stress and unemployment supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and conducted at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan in the late 1960s by Cobb, Kasl, and French (Cobb, & Kasl, 1977). In the early 1980s this research continued, largely focusing on the mental health consequences of unemployment as assessed in a large community study (Kessler, House, & Turner, 1987) and also in another large community study of Vietnam Veterans (Vinokur, Caplan, & Williams, 1987). As this research went forward, we turned our attention to the development of an intervention program to help unemployed workers seek a way back to the marketplace and at the same time protect their mental health. We therefore designed the JOBS intervention program for anyone seeking a job, with a focus on those currently unemployed.

Furthermore, the JOBS program was designed to be delivered to groups of job seekers with eight to twenty participants using a workshop format that allows for extensive interaction between the participants and two group facilitators. We implemented the program in various settings including community centers, social service agencies, union halls, churches, and community colleges.

It was clear that in a successful intervention the emotional and psychological needs of the job seekers must be addressed along with the need to learn job seeking skills, since most job seekers have recently endured the stressful, sometimes traumatic experience of job loss. Thus the intervention protocol includes heavy reliance on (1) self-esteem and confidence boosting techniques and (2) the participants’ own record of strengths by giving them visible opportunities to realize, show, and build on their personal resources. The attention to the emotional needs of the job seekers and the reliance on their strengths emphasized in the JOBS program sets it apart from past efforts to accelerate the return of the unemployed to the job market in the Job Club program (Azrin, & Beasalel, 1982).

This emphasis on designing the JOBS programming in ways that address the emotional needs of the participants has the dual goal of making the participants’ job-search more persistent and effective and at the same time preventing the deterioration in mental health often observed among the unemployed. Our research and that of others has already shown that job loss and unemployment places the person at risk for having a high level of depressive symptoms or developing a major depression. It has also been shown that reemployment brings with it a restoration to the normal level of mental health that existed prior to the unemployment. In designing the JOBS program with the dual goal of creating effective job-search and addressing the emotional needs of unemployed job seekers, we intended it to be a preventive intervention for those especially at risk for depression as a result of job loss.

Most generally, the design the JOBS program was based on a combination of social psychological evidence-based principles for successful behavioral change (Caplan, Vinokur, & Price, 1997). The most general principle that applied to the design of the JOBS intervention was that successful behavioral outcomes are achieved through the combination of techniques that build up relevant skills and the motivation to use them. We then designed principles and techniques to maximize the acquisition of skills involved in job-search as well as those to enhance and maintain the motivation of the job seekers. For building skills, we applied the principles of active learning through...
modeling and the use of role-playing exercises. For enhancing motivation, we applied techniques that build job-search self-efficacy. To safeguard motivation and self-efficacy, we applied principles of inoculation against setbacks. Finally to ensure effective delivery, we taught trainers to provide unconditional positive regard, supportive positive feedback, and moderate self-disclosure as well as to model skillful behaviors before having participants engage in role-play exercises.

Of major importance in the implementation of the JOBS program is the appropriate selection and training of facilitators. The group facilitators must be experienced in the use of active teaching processes involving group problem solving and modeling appropriate behaviors. Facilitators are not simple conveyors of information but experts in navigating the group processes according to the JOBS protocol, with the ability to connect emotionally with the participants. They provide appropriate social support and guidance as well as promoting rewarding interactions among the participants. To select potentially successful trainers we looked for persons who are empathic and socially skilled as well as able to adapt and facilitate social interactions in a group setting. We have often resorted to auditions where we asked candidates to enact various training episodes or sections from our intervention protocol while our staff played the role of unemployed workshop participants. Overall, our trainers came from diverse backgrounds with these skills as the major criterion for selection. Finally, we paired female and male facilitators in delivering the program together to each group of unemployed persons because this would provide additional role model similarity for participants.

![Figure 1](https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/oxfordimages/1/5/0/4/2/5/7/0/0/Figure_1_6.png)

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework underlying the JOBS program that guides both delivery and research. The framework describes the (1) intervention itself, (2) mediating processes produced by the program and reemployment, and (3) the economic and mental health outcomes for the individual job seeker.

The intervention itself is described in Figure 1 combines two types of processes designed to maximize the acquisition of required skills. One process is that of active teaching and learning that involves eliciting job-search information from the participants themselves thus relying on their resources and strengths. In this process the trainers engage the participants in problem solving discussions followed by modeling various job-search behaviors, and role playing practice. The facilitators provide a variety of opportunities for social modeling, role playing in pairs and in groups, graded exposure to new tasks to promote mastery and positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, always avoiding critical or negative feedback. The program is designed to create a social environment where the participant feels positive regard rather than being judged by others, where a variety of views and choices are considered appropriate, where there is a positive norm for sharing experiences with one another and mutual support and encouragement.

The content of the intervention includes participants identifying their own marketable skills, networking for job leads, self presentation to prospective employers, and anticipating the setbacks and barriers that they will inevitably encounter.

Our conceptual framework indicates two mediating processes need to be completed to result in successful outcomes. One process involves the job seeker as a person who acquires the job-search skills thereby also developing job-search self-efficacy. The other process involves the effectiveness and persistence of the job-search behavior itself. Job-search behavior that is effective and persistent leads to reemployment, the reduction of
economic hardship, and improvement mental health.

The overall result is that the JOBS program is carefully designed to increase participant’s sense of job-search self-efficacy and their ability to cope with the setbacks encountered in the job-search process. Both of the research programs we turn to next and the actual design and implementation of the program we describe later are guided by the model in Figure 1.

The JOBS Research Program

Our program of research has followed the prevention research cycle (Price, Friedland, Choi, & Caplan, 1998) moving from (1) risk-factor research with vulnerable populations to identify modifiable risk factors, to (2) randomized preventive efficacy trials to test the impact of interventions aimed at reducing potentially modifiable risk factors. The goal of the prevention research cycle is to combine the tools of epidemiology to identify populations at risk with the power of randomized trials to evaluate efficacy of prevention efforts aimed at reducing adverse health and mental health outcomes and finally to conduct services research to guide effective program implementation and dissemination. For successful efficacy trials, research moves to (3) effectiveness trials to test the impact of interventions with various vulnerable populations in actual service settings and varied national and cultural contexts. In both efficacy and effectiveness trials additional research is undertaken to identify the mechanisms by which interventions have their effects. When positive effectiveness trials are obtained, (4) dissemination strategies for successful programs are undertaken.

Risk-Factor Research: Unemployment Risks to Individuals and Families

Results from a community epidemiology survey in a sample of high unemployment census tracts in southeastern Michigan established that job losers showed significant elevations of depression, anxiety, and self-reported physical illness (Kessler, House, & Turner, 1987). In addition, social support of spouses reduced the psychosocial impact and social isolation associated with job loss among the unemployed (Kessler, Turner, & House, 1988). In a set of analyses designed to identify key processes that intervene in the relationship between unemployment and poor mental health, Kessler, Turner, and House (1987) identified financial strain as a critical mediating factor. Price, van Ryn, and Vinokur (1992), Vinokur, Price, and Schül (1995), and Vinokur and Schül (1997) corroborated these epidemiological findings and also identified other modifiable vulnerability factors, including elevated depressive symptoms, and low sense of mastery.

Taken together, these findings were critical in the design of the Michigan Prevention Research Center (MPRC) preventive trials. A later study of 756 persons experiencing job loss over a period of 2 years by Price, Choi, and Vinokur (2002) clarified still further links in the chain of adversity between job loss and poor health. Their study shows that depression is an immediate response to job loss, but that loss of personal control and increases in financial hardship both play a critical role in subsequent reports of poor health and declines in social and emotional functioning. Together these studies show how the interplay of adverse life events such as job loss trigger depression, economic hardship, and the erosion of personal control, leading to deteriorating social and emotional functioning and poor health (see also, in this volume, both Bambra & Eikemo and Paul et al.)

The negative effects of job loss radiate well beyond the unemployed individual. The stressful circumstances of job loss and economic strain powerfully influence intimate relationships in the family (see also McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, this volume). Vinokur, Price, and Caplan (1996) studied the impact of financial strain on couples in terms of changes in providing social support, such as help, advice and understanding, and engaging in social undermining behavior, such as criticism and insults. A unique feature of their studies has been measurement of support and undermining both provided and received by each partner, allowing more reliable combined estimates of support and undermining processes in the relationship. Their results demonstrated that financial strain results in a decrease in social support and an increase in social undermining in couples, which, in turn, increases both depressive symptoms and marital dissatisfaction. It should be noted that the decrease in marital satisfaction may account for a documented increase in marital separation and divorce (Stack, 1981). The effects of social undermining in these analyses were significantly stronger than those of social support, particularly with respect to symptoms of depression. These findings are consistent with Vinokur and van Ryn (1993). The effects of unemployment on family process suggest that reemployment can have equally important positive effects on the well-being of family
Randome Trials: Tests of JOBS Efficacy

Our approach to test the efficacy of the JOBS program has striven to design sequential trials in which each new trial capitalizes on knowledge derived from the last (Caplan, Vinokur, & Price, 1997; Price, Friedland, & Vinokur, 1998). Designed using behavioral science principles to enhance skill, motivation, and a sense of self-efficacy in job-search, the JOBS program was delivered by trained facilitators in a group format to unemployed workers. The efficacy of the program was tested in large-scale randomized trials with a 2-year follow-up and measurement of economic status, mental health, and family relationship outcomes. JOBS also served as a laboratory to study human coping with adversity—that is, the study of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustment that takes place following a stressful event (Hobfoll, 1989). Unlike most other evaluations of social program innovations, JOBS was designed not only to measure impact but also to measure the underlying psychosocial processes by which the program had its effects, both in providing knowledge to improve the program and also in testing hypotheses concerning the role of support, skill, self-efficacy, and inoculation against setbacks in coping with adversity.

Results of the first JOBS randomized trial (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989) indicated that, compared with control group participants, the program produced higher motivation to persist in job-search efforts, more rapid and higher rates reemployment, and reduction in mental health problems. Furthermore, a benefit cost analysis (Vinokur, van Ryn, Gramlich, & Price, 1991) demonstrated that the JOBS program provided economic benefits to recipients and increases in government revenues (taxes paid on income that followed reemployment) that far exceeded the cost of delivery. This benefit-cost study has clear policy implications for the economic benefits of science based job-search programs if implemented with high quality and fidelity to their original design.

After demonstrating beneficial effects of the first JOBS efficacy trial, we then conducted additional risk-factor analyses of these preventive efficacy trial data and were able to demonstrate that the beneficial mental health effects of the JOBS intervention were primarily experienced by an identifiable subgroup of individuals who were at highest risk for later episodes of depression unless they received the JOBS intervention (Price, van Ryn, & Vinokur, 1992). These individuals were characterized by elevated levels of depressive symptoms, high levels of financial strain, and low levels of social assertiveness. These findings led to critical design changes in our preventive intervention to prospectively test the hypothesis that it is these individuals, who are not only at higher risk for significant deterioration in mental health but are also most likely to benefit from the JOBS preventive intervention.

The second JOBS efficacy trial study provided a replication of the results of the first JOBS experiment with several enhancements and new extensions. In particular, the delivery procedures that involve active teaching and learning and inoculation against setbacks were emphasized and expanded. The results of the second efficacy trial (Vinokur, Price, & Schul, 1995) demonstrated that the JOBS intervention significantly decreased depression, improved role and emotional functioning, and also increased rates and quality of reemployment, which, in turn, had a major impact on decreasing financial strain. The preventive impact of the second enhanced JOBS intervention on depression was also demonstrated, using measures obtained from spouses and other significant others who reported on the job seeker’s mental health and role and emotional functioning. In addition, the second efficacy trial of JOBS significantly increased the sense of mastery among the participants, and this increase in mastery had a preventive impact on depression symptoms. Finally, the extended JOBS II field experiment demonstrated that the intervention primarily improved the mental health and the reemployment outcomes of the high-risk respondents. A 2-year follow-up of the JOBS II randomized trial (Vinokur, Schul, Vuori, & Price, 2000) demonstrated that the program had an impact on a wide range of psychosocial outcomes including motivation, mental health, and physical health; it also provided economic benefits through higher-paying and higher-quality jobs.

Individual Mechanisms Underlying JOBS Effectiveness

One of the distinctive features of our research program has been the development of measurement and analysis techniques that allow the identification of those factors most important in producing positive outcomes in preventive trials. For example, early in our program of research on the effects of the JOBS program, van Ryn and Vinokur (1992) identified increases in the sense of job search self-efficacy as a critical mediator produced by the JOBS intervention that increased job-search motivation, reemployment, and positive mental health outcomes.
As our program of research has continued, additional individual psychosocial processes have been uncovered that account for the effectiveness of the JOBS program. Vuori and Vinokur (2005) identified job-search preparedness, the combination of job-search self-efficacy and inoculation against setbacks, as a key factor in unemployed populations in Finland who benefited from the jobs intervention. Price, Vinokur and Friedland (2002) identified the role of job seeker as a resource in undertaking the complex social task of successful job search. That is, teaching unemployed persons that the task of job search is greatly enhanced when the individual recognizes that job search is a “job in itself” and that the role of job seeker is one that can be understood and played skillfully to increase the chances of finding a good job. Job search is often stressful and filled with failures and setbacks. Vinokur and Schult (1997) reported that JOBS increased resilience and inoculation against setbacks protecting job seekers from distress and depression not only in their current job search but subsequently in the event of a second job loss. Finally, Choi, Price and Vinokur (2003) showed that group processes that enhance self efficacy were key ingredients in group-based aspects of the JOBS intervention.

Group Influences on Job-Search Self-Efficacy, Motivation, Reemployment, and Mental Health

Some of the positive effects of the JOBS program are due to individual psychological changes, but some are due to the way group processes that are designed into the delivery of the JOBS program. Choi, Price, and Vinokur (2003) focused on identifying JOBS program group influences on job-search self-efficacy, since there is a large literature on social learning theory suggesting that efficacy processes are important in meeting challenging tasks (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Earlier MPRC research by Vinokur and Schult (2002) had shown that individual job-search self-efficacy was a key mediator linking job seekers experience in the program to reemployment and improved mental health outcomes. Thus it was crucial to see which elements of the group process in the JOBS program actually influenced this key change in participant motivation. Interestingly, some influences on job-search self-efficacy came from both individual-level experiences and from the group itself. Seeing participation in the group as a positive experience and the leadership of the group as supportive was influential at the individual level, while the open climate of the group itself and both gender and educational diversity were positive influences on people’s job-search self-efficacy at the group level. It is often assumed that groups need to be specialized by educational level or gender to be effective. Our results suggest the opposite. Perhaps a wider variety of educational backgrounds and having both men and women in the group provides a useful range of role models for participants.

A second important question is how do group perceptions of key features of the JOBS program influence later distress, depression, and reemployment? The JOBS program was designed to address five major psychosocial issues every time the intervention was delivered by (1) employing active learning methods, (2) ensuring skilled trainer delivery, (3) preparing participants for setbacks, (4) providing a supportive learning environment, and finally (5) providing explicit instruction in job-search skills. Vuori, Price, Mutanen, and Malmberg-Heimonen (2005) examined the degree to which each of these aspects of the JOBS group process influenced both reemployment and mental health. Not all features of the group process were equally influential. Indeed, trainee skills were particularly important in reducing depressive symptoms and in producing higher levels of reemployment. Of particular importance was the finding that group emphasis on preparation for setbacks had a much more substantial impact on the reduction of distress and depression and was especially powerful in helping those at highest risk for depression. Earlier studies at the individual level of analysis also showed that those with elevated depressive symptoms benefitted from JOBS with better protected mental health outcomes than their control-group counterparts (Vinokur, Price, & Schult, 1995).

Demonstrations of Effectiveness in Service Settings

Our research program follows the public health distinction between preliminary efficacy trials aimed at demonstrating impact under more controlled, experimentally ideal conditions and later effectiveness trials aimed at demonstrating wider impact over time with different populations; it was implemented under a range of actual organizational and service delivery conditions. Effectiveness trials are an essential test of the robustness of the program and the range of populations for which it is appropriate. The findings reported below demonstrate that the JOBS intervention has demonstrated broad effectiveness with a variety of outcomes, populations, and modes of service delivery.
Large-Scale Implementation

In an early effectiveness trial, Price, Friedland, Choi and Caplan (1998) reported a large-scale demonstration conducted in three cities in California and serving over 6,500 unemployed persons. The demonstration showed that the JOBS program could be implemented on a large scale, training human service workers in three demographically diverse communities, and could be implemented with high quality. A subsequent cross-level study (Choi, Price, & Vinokur, 2003) of the supportive and skill-building group process in the Winning New Jobs (WNJ) program, the implementation program of JOBS in California, demonstrated that the carefully designed group learning environment engendered by the program produced increases in self-efficacy in participants that was critical for subsequent successful job search.

Welfare-to-Work Clients

Effectiveness trials have also been conducted with welfare clients as part of government welfare-to-work initiatives. From 2000 to 2002 workshops were implemented and evaluated within the “From the Ground Up” program of the Department of Social Services of Baltimore County, Maryland. At present, the program is still ongoing in its original format. The workshops provided job-search skills to the welfare-to-work clients and were evaluated on the mental health and employment outcomes of participating clients. The evaluation included baseline data collected from 1,756 program applicants of whom 1,543 entered and participated in the program and 213 applicants who did not participate. The workshop produced positive impacts on participants increasing their motivation and readiness to engage in job-search. Workshops also improved mental health, reduced depressive symptoms, and increased participant sense of personal control. Follow-up assessments after clients’ participation in the comprehensive “From the Ground Up” program, which included the JOBS workshop, demonstrated that participation improved the mental health and well-being of the participating clients and also facilitated their entry into the workforce.

International Dissemination of JOBS: Finland, China, and Ireland

As the scientific evidence began to accumulate on the effectiveness of the JOBS program, we began to receive the inquiries from a variety of countries interested in the implementation of the program (Price, 2006). In some cases, these inquiries led to long-term scientific collaborations and to program and policy impacts in the collaborating nations. In other cases, JOBS contributions primarily involved the dissemination of behavioral science knowledge and the training of service providers in other countries. In all cases we worked intensively with our partners in training the people who delivered the program. Cultural adaptations consisted largely of translation of the training manual into the native language of facilitators and participants and adapting examples in the manual and program so that they were appropriate to the cultural setting. However, we found that the group-based process for active learning, the overall program structure, and the ordering of topics in the JOBS program were well accepted in all the international settings in which the program was implemented. Below we briefly describe three major scientific collaborations in Finland, the People’s Republic of China, and Ireland. In addition to the dissemination projects described below, JOBS has been disseminated by collaborators in the Netherlands, Sweden, and South Korea.

Finland

Collaboration in Finland began with preliminary discussions and scientific exchanges with Jukka Vuori, of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. It and the Ministry of Labor in Finland later supported an initial randomized trial in Turku and a large-scale nationwide dissemination of the JOBS program called “Työhön.” Analysis of the randomized trial in Turku showed that the program replicated the effects obtained in the United States and, in addition, was effective with individuals experiencing chronic long-term unemployment (Vuori, Silvonen, Vinokur, & Price, 2002). Further analyses on mediating mechanisms responsible for program’s effectiveness showed that it had its effects through increased job seeker motivation and job-search preparation (Vuori & Vinokur, 2005). The program was then disseminated on a national scale. A cross-level analysis of the national program identified critical group-level processes in the intervention that influenced job-search motivation and mental health (Vuori, et al, 2005). A description of the cultural adaptation of the program and its implementation is available as well (Vuori & Price, 2006). Vuori and his colleagues at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health have extended this program of research by adopting the JOBS model and creating new programs across the life course, including adolescents making the transition to work and persons approaching retirement.
People's Republic of China
In the last two decades, the transformation of the Chinese economy from state socialism to a market economy has brought significant benefits and dramatic economic growth but also significant strains and dislocations that have had substantial impact on Chinese workers. Employees in State Owned Enterprises are being laid off in large numbers and are feeling the impact of increasing job insecurity, job loss and distress. The impact of this economic transformation in Chinese society has been documented in a survey of workers in seven Chinese cities (Price & Fang, 2002) and found to vary from generation to generation. While the younger generation of workers searching for jobs is intensely worried about their future and show high levels of distress, middle-aged workers who survived the Cultural Revolution feel relatively secure, while the elderly are deeply discouraged by their prospects for the future. In collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences of the People's Republic of China, implementation of the JOBS program in China was undertaken in seven cities and data were collected not only from unemployed job seekers who participated in the program but also from their spouses or significant others. Data on the family dynamics of unemployed Chinese workers and their spouses have yielded interesting cross-cultural comparisons between US and Chinese couples (Price, Choi, & Lim, 2006).

Ireland
While economic growth and prosperity has been the rule among urban areas in much of Ireland, rural Ireland and particularly Northern Ireland continue to experience chronic unemployment and worker discouragement, with related health, mental health, and alcohol problems. We have undertaken a partnership with Professor Margaret Barry and her colleagues at the National University of Ireland and Anne Sheridan in the Irish Health Service to implement the JOBS program with experimental trials both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. The research results indicate that the JOBS program is effective not only with chronically unemployed Irish workers but also with service recipients in the mental health system (Barry, 2005). Encouraged by these results, the Irish government is planning to expand JOBS services.

JOBS in Practice: Protocol for Training and Delivery
Below we briefly describe the protocol for training group facilitators and delivery of JOBS. It is important to note at the outset that this description or even access to the materials described here do not constitute an adequate basis for successful delivery of the JOBS program. Intensive training of group facilitators and follow-up training and monitoring for quality delivery of JOBS is essential.

Overview
The JOBS Program is a group-based psychological educational intervention that has the dual goals of promoting reemployment and enhancing the coping capacities of unemployed workers and their families. At the core of the program design are three broad theoretical principles that involve the acquisition of job-search self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and inoculation against setbacks (Meichenbaum, 1985) using active learning processes (Zimmerman, 2001). A more detailed description is provided in Price and Vinokur (1995). The intervention offers a system for delivery and evaluation of a job-search skill enhancement workshop for unemployed job seekers 17 to 65 years of age. Through a series of interactive sessions the JOBS Program helps participants identify effective job-search strategies, improve job-search skills, learn how to overcome setbacks in the job-search process, increase confidence to implement one’s job-search skills, and remain motivated to engage and persist in job-search activities until they become reemployed.

Program Design
The actual design of the JOBS program involved a group learning situation with twelve to twenty participants per group occurring in five 4-hour sessions during a 1-week period (see manual by Curran, Wishart, & Gingrich, 1999). Participants were recruited in unemployment offices and learning groups were facilitated by male-female trainer pairs that had been carefully trained to deliver a standardized group protocol. Unlike other job-search programs, the focus was on the group participants rather than the trainer, participant-to-participant interactions were emphasized, effective behavior was reinforced and criticism eliminated; furthermore, participants were supported rather than challenged, being taught the idea that “believing you can do it”; that is, engagement in a successful job-search was emphasized. Throughout the program participants went through a series of active learning cycles beginning with trainers presenting a topic such as finding job leads, then role modeling effective job-search tactics, followed by participants practicing their new skills within the group, all of which this was followed by debriefing and group discussion of the newly learned skills (Curran et al., 1999). A schematic presentation of the cycles is displayed in Figure 2.

How It Works

The JOBS program is delivered during five half-day sessions in employment offices, social service settings, community settings, and outplacement programs. Because social support is crucial to participants’ ability to learn new skills and face job-market challenges, the program is delivered to groups of twelve to twenty job seekers. JOBS workshop leaders use active learning methods to engage participants rather than didactic teaching techniques. Workshop leaders model by example and reinforce supportive behavior and effective job-search activities and skills and work to create a supportive learning environment through exercises that provide opportunities for participants to learn from and support each other.

Workshop leaders help participants discover principles of successful and unsuccessful job-search strategies, model and role-play effective job-search activities and techniques, such as job interview, and encourage active participation. Program participants are engaged in problem-solving processes to help them cope with unemployment-related stress, the job-search process, and the inevitable setbacks they will encounter. Because the program is designed with a heavy reliance on group discussions and interactions among the participants involving social support, members are encouraged to raise their individual concerns and receive support and advice from both the workshop leaders and other group members. Thus, the program accommodates the individual needs of the participants. Recruitment begins in central organizational settings such as state employment offices, various social service organizations, or outplacement programs in human resources departments.

Training Workshop Facilitators

JOBS program workshop facilitators must be trained by master trainers from the Michigan Prevention Research Center. Workshop leaders should be carefully chosen by the master trainer or agency personnel to have demonstrated skills or experience in group facilitation and collaboration. They should be rigorously trained to be able to co-train together and to build trust among program participants. Training teams should consist of pairs of...
co-trainers. In some contexts, male/female co-trainers may be preferred. The training is provided in a 2-week course followed by another week of later feedback from a master trainer observing actual delivery of the program. A program manual, JOBS: A Manual for Teaching People Successful Job-Search Strategies, outlines techniques for selecting and hiring workshop leaders; it describes the training, design, and delivery of the Mock Job-Search Seminar and Trainer’s Forum. One program manual is required for each workshop leader as it also includes implementation and evaluation materials for the five-session job-search intervention.

**What Participants Gain**

![Figure 3](image.png)

Figure 3 provides a portrait of what participants gain by attending the JOBS workshop and a more detailed rationale for the way the JOBS program has been designed (also see Price & Vinokur, 1995). JOBS is designed to produce improved job-search skills, increased confidence, increased awareness of appropriate strategies for coping with stress and setbacks, and increased motivation for job-search. First and foremost, it is essential to have especially skilled trainers who can generate trust, are perceived as credible, and can generate participation while also increasing participants’ motivation and confidence in their own abilities. High levels of active participation stand in contrast to more didactic and passive approaches to teaching job-search skills. Increased participation not only increases engagement but also improves opportunities for skill acquisition, opens people up to a range of possible strategies, and increases confidence. The program provides a safe and supportive learning environment where trainers encourage and support participants and encourage participants to support each other. Group exercises are done in a supportive atmosphere that not only enhances learning and minimizes dropouts but also enhances an approach where participants are more likely to risk trying out new ideas. Problem-solving strategies help participants to be ready when setbacks occur by learning how to reframe their experience and devise ways to identify and overcome barriers. Knowing how to successfully deal with problems that confront one in the job-search process is a key coping strategy for dealing with stressful encounters.

**Support Materials**

The JOBS manual for training and delivery can be found at:


It consists of five chapters and is accompanied by two videotapes. The five chapters of the manual and the videotapes are described below.

The JOBS implementation manual is Chapter 1 (110 single-spaced pages), which provides a thorough description of how trainers should be trained for high-quality delivery of the JOBS program. The jobs implementation manual covers topics such as selecting and hiring trainers, the orientation and description of the training process, the description of intervention seminar training, the trainers forum for follow-up training of trainers to fine-tuned trainer skills, and logistical material on locating and working with sites as well as a bibliography.

The JOBS workshop protocol is Chapter 2 (78 pages) with detailed script to guide trainers during initial training and throughout the delivery process. It describes in detail how each day of the training program is laid out, how sessions work, and covers the following: Session 1—teaching of participants to discover his or her job skills;
Session 2—dealing with obstacles to employment; Session 3—finding job openings; Session 4—designing resumes, creating contacts, and interviewing; and Session 5—a review of the complete job interview and planning for setbacks in the job-search process.

Handouts for Participants
Chapter 3 of the manual consists of approximately forty detailed handouts for the participants to accompany each of the detailed session descriptions and behavioral scripts for each of the five training sessions in the jobs program.

Quality Assessment and Monitoring Instrument
Chapter 4 provides pre- and posttest rating scales for participants that provide opportunities to check for improved quality of delivery from administration to administration of the JOBS program.

Protocols and Checklists for Observers to Monitor Quality in the Delivery of the JOBS Program
These assessments in Chapter 5 specify trainer tasks, detailed trainer activities, and expected group behavior for every training session for participants of the JOBS intervention. This is followed by a set a rating scales allowing observers to assess additional characteristics of the quality of training on multiple dimensions. The behavioral checklist, pre- and posttest assessment, and observer rating scales allow systematic data-based feedback to trainers to maintain and improve quality from delivery to delivery of the JOBS program.

Videotapes
In addition to the five chapters in the overall JOBS manual, two training videotapes are available. They were produced during the Winning New Jobs (W NJ) implementation project in California. The first, titled “From Within Themselves,” is designed give trainers a general orientation to delivering the JOBS program through observation and to provide an opportunity for discussion in training sessions. A second videotape, titled “Path to the Future,” is designed to give administrators in agencies delivering the JOBS program clear idea of the role of administrators in supporting the JOBS program. Both training videos involve interviews with actual participants to provide a highly credible set of supportive materials for implementing the JOBS program.

Future Directions for Research and Practice with the JOBS Program

A Need to Investigate the Effects of Additional Mechanisms and Mediators
While the research to date focused on and demonstrated the effects of two key mediators, job-search efficacy and inoculation against setbacks, there are other potential mechanisms that may be identified in the intervention process and need to be tested in future research. Most of these mechanisms are briefly reviewed here. One such mechanism is Implementation Intentions. In several sections of the intervention, participants were encouraged to develop concrete plans of action to which they commit themselves, such as developing job leads and arranging for job interviews. These preparations amount to the development of implementation intentions, which, has been shown by Gollwitzer (1996) to increase the likelihood that an intended action would actually be performed. Participants were also asked to announce their plans to the group. Such public commitment has been suggested in the literature to enhance the adherence to the commitment to act (Pelz, 1958). In addition various procedures were introduced to enhance identification with the trainers as stronger identification is shown to produce greater acceptance of communication from the source—that is, the workshop leaders (Kelman, 1958). Thus the protocol includes statements by the workshop leaders that made them more likable using moderate self-disclosure (Derlaga, Harris, & Chaikin, 1973) and enhancing their referent and expert power (French & Raven, 1968). For example, when the workshop leaders introduced themselves to the participants they told them of their own background and experiences with job loss and unemployment (enhancing referent power). They also made the participants know of the extensive training they received in preparation for delivering the workshop and the long training experience they have with the JOBS workshops (enhancing expert power).

Studies show that when individuals’ self-esteem is enhanced, their defensiveness is reduced, and they become...
more open and receptive to new information and ideas (Sherman & Cohen, 2002). We therefore embedded in the JOBS protocol various procedures to enhance the participants’ self-esteem. For example, various activities and exercises were designed to have the participants experience success, followed by workshop leaders providing specific and individual positive feedback with praising or appreciative comments on the behavior and performance of the workshop members.

Another mechanism that appears in the literature to facilitate receptivity to new ideas and attitude change is the repetition of arguments that support the information provided during group discussion (Brauer, Judd; & Gliner, 1995). Workshop leaders were trained to encourage the group members to elaborate on information and ideas raised in the group, which resulted in argument repetition.

Recent studies have demonstrated the importance of reciprocal social support. The positive effects of social support are more pronounced when the support is being reciprocated, that is, when the receiver has the opportunity to also provide support to the giver (Nahum-Shani, Bamberger, & Bacharach, in press; Nadler, 1998). The JOBS workshop participants not only encouraged socially supportive interactions among themselves but the various small group role playing exercises included procedures for everyone to provide supportive comments to the others.

Last but not least, a rich literature documents the impressive effects of self-fulfilling prophecies on motivation and performance (also referred to as the Pygmalion effect; Eden, 1990). Here we view prophesies as expectations of success. The JOBS program included steps to increase the self fulfilling prophesies of both the workshop leaders and the participants. The training of the leaders included communication of information on past successes of the program in various settings and how able and talented are most job seekers who participate in the workshop to make the most of it. Similar information about expected success was also communicated to the participants. All of these communications had the goal of creating expectations of success that will generate the self fulfilling prophecies of successful coping. It is for future research to determine which and how much each of these mechanisms built into the delivery protocol of JOBS plays a role in achieved level of final outcomes.

A Need for Cross-Level Analyses and Adaptive Treatments in Intervention Research

What have we learned about the active ingredients of the JOBS program that makes it work? Both our studies of the way JOBS program influences individual psychological mediators (Vinokur & Schul, 1997, 2002) and group mediated processes (Choi, Price, & Vinokur, 2003; Vuori, et al., 2005) show that job-search self efficacy, and inoculation against setbacks are clearly important intermediate outcomes leading to effective job search and reemployment. However a number of enabling conditions in the JOBS program are crucial for learning these skills. These enabling conditions include an atmosphere of trust, an open group climate for sharing ideas, encouragement and modeling new and more effective behaviors, an emphasis on support and absence of criticism are all critical enabling conditions for effective program delivery.

Disentangling which of these are individual meditational processes versus group mediated effects will be a continuing and challenging research agenda. Cross-level studies need to be conducted to understand what aspect of interventions like JOBS are due to contextual variables and what aspects are due to individual change. Identifying the individual and the group level effects is essential for future designs that may include adaptive interventions and to other designs that will be delivered as internet web based interventions. The methodologies are now widely available to accomplish this (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Price (2003) has argued that intervention research should take advantage of this cross-level research approach in future work.

Our results also make it clear that some unemployed participants in JOBS are particularly vulnerable to depression (Price, van Ryn, & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur, Price, & Schul, 1995), and results reported by Vuori and his colleagues (Vuori et al., 2005) also make it very clear that some elements of the JOBS group experience will be particularly helpful to subpopulations at risk for depression. Inoculation against setbacks was a particularly important element of the group process for people at high risk for depression. These results suggests the possibility that researchers should consider designs in which adaptive treatments (Cronbach & Snow, 1977) are available providing greater emphasis on one group technique or practice for particular vulnerable subgroups, tailoring the intervention for maximal impact.
The JOBS Program

New Populations That Could Benefit from JOBS Core Ingredients

Thus far the majority of our research and intervention work has focused on job losers seeking to obtain new employment. However we believe that the basic JOBS model can be provided to a wide range of populations attempting to make the transition to gainful employment. First there are a number of employment transitions throughout the life cycle in addition to assisting unemployed workers that could be addressed. For example, unemployed youth attempting to enter the workforce for the first time are in need of support in making the transition (O’Higgins, 2001). At the other end of the life cycle, working life is being transformed in ways that suggest that the elderly may continue to seek paid employment for considerably longer than has traditionally been the case (Kite & Johnson, 1988). At the same time, the labor market for full-time paid employment is dramatically changing and nonstandard jobs and part-time employment are much more prevalent in the workforce (Friedland & Price, 2003; Price & Burgard, 2008). These jobs often lack benefits or a regular schedule, and millions of workers are part of a new nonstandard job market, where transitions in and out of jobs will need to be skilfully navigated A variety of special populations not currently employed could also be beneficiaries of the JOBS program and benefit from paid employment either on a part-time or full-time basis in ways that can be crucial for rehabilitation and well-being. For example, disabled persons reentering the workforce after illness or injury (DePoy & Gilson, 2004) face special challenges in obtaining employment and could in many instances greatly benefit. Indeed, we already have evidence that the JOBS program can be effective with persons in the welfare-to-work population. In addition, employment is critical in the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals returning to the community who also face special challenges in obtaining jobs and without employment are at higher risk of recidivism (Maruna, 2001). In a similar vein, employment is critical for returning soldiers who seek reintegration into civilian life after completing their military service.

Transferring What We Have Learned to Help Navigate Other Risky Transitions in the Life Course

The transition from unemployment back to the workforce is just one of a number of risky life transitions in the life course where interventions with some of the same core ingredients as JOBS could be beneficial. Our research suggests that at least five intervention ingredients may be important in helping a wide variety of populations confronting a risky life transition. Interventions would clearly require (1) specific normative knowledge and skills that address the particular transition the person is experiencing. In the case of job search, specific knowledge about self-presentation to prospective employers and how to identify job leads are examples. At least as important as substantive information in such groups is the skill with which the groups are conducted. In addition, (2) Skilled and well-trained group leaders are essential to the effectiveness of such groups. Programs of this sort are not impromptu affairs and group leader training and skill is essential. (3) An active learning and teaching style including role playing, modeling, peer- to-peer discussion, and positive feedback is critical so that participants can practice the requisite skills, to see a variety of interaction styles and solutions modeled for the same problems, and gain confidence in their own approaches. In addition, (4) a positive reinforcing style of teaching is essential. The detailed knowledge being offered in the group has to be provided in ways that are both encouraging and nonthreatening to people who are usually feeling vulnerable in their life circumstances. Purely didactic approaches or implicit blaming are likely to be ineffective and even destructive. Finally, most life transitions and their aftermath contain many setbacks and failed attempts that must be overcome. It is reasonable to hypothesize that (5) teaching people to plan to cope with anticipated setbacks during the transition is a critical ingredient in the success of both the JOBS program and in other similar programs involving charting a new direction in the life course.

A Delicate Balance

Practitioners often feel that they face a delicate balance in maintaining fidelity to evidence-based practices or engaging in creative adaptation to local circumstances or particular populations in delivering the JOBS program (Price et al., 1998). On the one hand, practitioners attempting to use evidence-based practices will quite appropriately be urged to maintain fidelity to the core features of a practice that has previously been validated by rigorous research. On the other hand, practitioners know that they must also adapt their practices to the particular characteristics of populations they serve and cope with the challenging practical circumstances of limited funds and staff available to deliver programs. Finding ways of managing the fidelity-adaptation dilemma in the case of JOBS will continue to be a challenge for practitioners attempting to implement programs aimed at behavior change.
At the same time, the creativity and innovativeness of practitioners in the field is often not well appreciated. As end users of research-based innovations such as JOBS, practitioners can be creative and resourceful innovators who develop variations on the basic intervention model that opens the way for new applications with different populations. In fact, von Hippel (1988, 2005) shows that the vast majority of innovations are created not by inventors, but by end-users of a new social technology or invention who find creative new uses and adaptations.

There seems no simple solution to the fidelity–adaptation dilemma (Blakeley et al., 1987). On the one hand, researchers will quite appropriately expect practitioners to maintain fidelity to carefully designed research-based protocols with demonstrated research effectiveness. Practitioners, on the other hand, spurred by creativity and the necessity of constrained resources, will borrow, adapt, and reinvent proven programs such as JOBS to fit constrained local circumstances or different cultural expectations. Perhaps the most appropriate strategy is to create communities of practice where there are opportunities for practitioners and researchers to join forces in a partnership to study innovative applications of programs like JOBS and thus to learn from each other more about how and for whom a particular helping program works best.

References


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