



## LOOKING BACK: WATCACE RESEARCH IN 2015

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# AGENDA FOR PRESENTATION



- Description of WatCACE and its objectives
- Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students
- Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being
- The Impact of Co-op and Reflection on the Development of Vocational Self-Concept
- The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences
- Questions

## Three Objectives



### CONDUCTING AND FACILITATING RESEARCH

- Projects undertaken by 'core' team
- Collaborations with both on and off campus partners
- Sponsored through WatCACE research funds



### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Involvement in on-campus and off-campus committees to provide input and to gain insights to inform research direction for WatCACE



### DISSEMINATION

- Presentations on and off campus
- Publications
- Research seminars
- Website, Daily Bulletin



# Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

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## Introduction



# Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

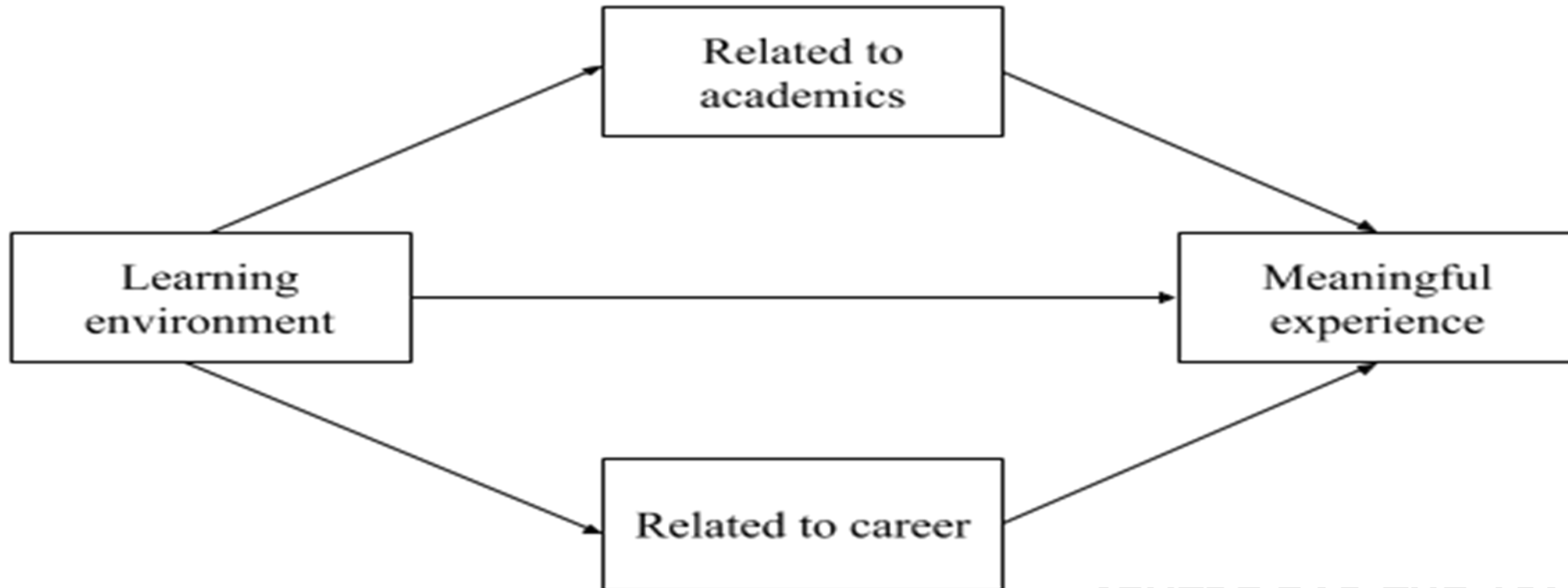
- The creation of meaningful work is an important goal for organizations
- Meaningful work is a key component of program success in work-integrated learning programs
- Little research has been conducted in order to examine how meaningful work can be created for students
- The purpose of this study was to investigate one mechanism through which meaningful work can be established

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# Literature Review



## Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students



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# Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

- 1,937 co-op students were surveyed
- The survey measured the following constructs
  - Learning environment
  - Relatedness to academics
  - Relatedness to career
  - Meaningfulness of experience
- Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS to examine the theoretical model

## Results



# Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

- The learning environment had a significant positive effect on relatedness to academics and career goals
- The learning environment also had a positive influence on meaningfulness derived from a work term
- Both academic and career relatedness had significant positive effects upon perceived meaningfulness of a work term
- Relatedness partially mediates the influence of a learning environment on meaningfulness



## Recommendations



# Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

- It is important to foster a learning environment in order to fully engage co-op employees
  - By increasing the meaningfulness of students' experiences, this will result in greater engagement of the student, higher productivity, and greater performance
- Students can play a proactive role in enhancing the meaningfulness of their work term experiences
  - Finding meaning in your employment experiences will increase your job satisfaction, productivity, and performance

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# Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

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## Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

- Subjective Well-being (SWB):
  - High satisfaction with life, high positive affect, and low negative affect
- Bottom-up theory: happiness comes from combination of pleasurable and unpleasurable moments and experiences
- Over 20% more first work term students unmatched after main round than total co-op students



# Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

### Research Questions:

1. How does the main round job match effect SWB for first work-term students?
2. What other external factors impact this effect on SWB?



## Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

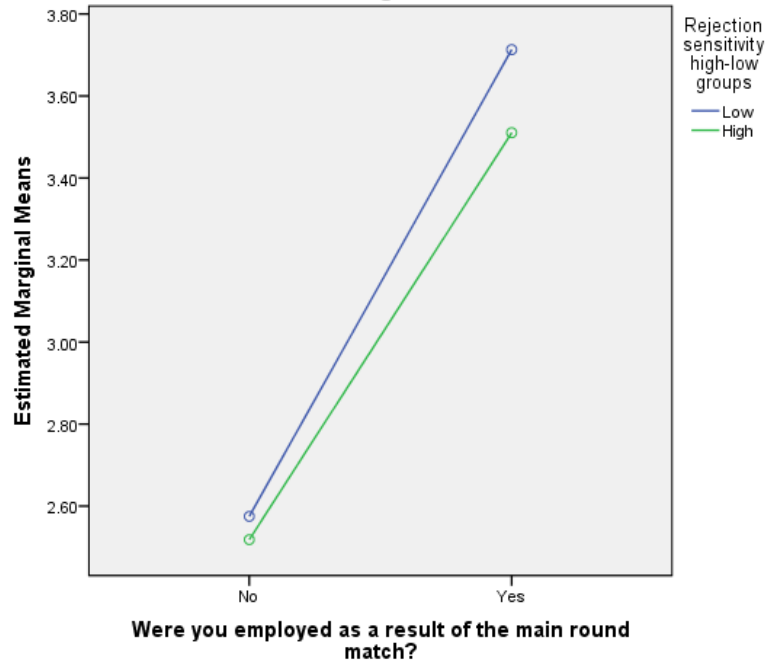
- Participants: first work term students
  - 2700 recruitment emails sent
  - 154 usable responses (6% response rate)
  - 64% female, 36% male
- Procedure: two electronic surveys (self-report)
  - T1 Pre-test: after main round interviews, before match
  - T2 Post-test: after match results
- Measures:
  - Rejection Sensitivity (RS): T1
  - Subjective Well-being: T1 & T2

# Results

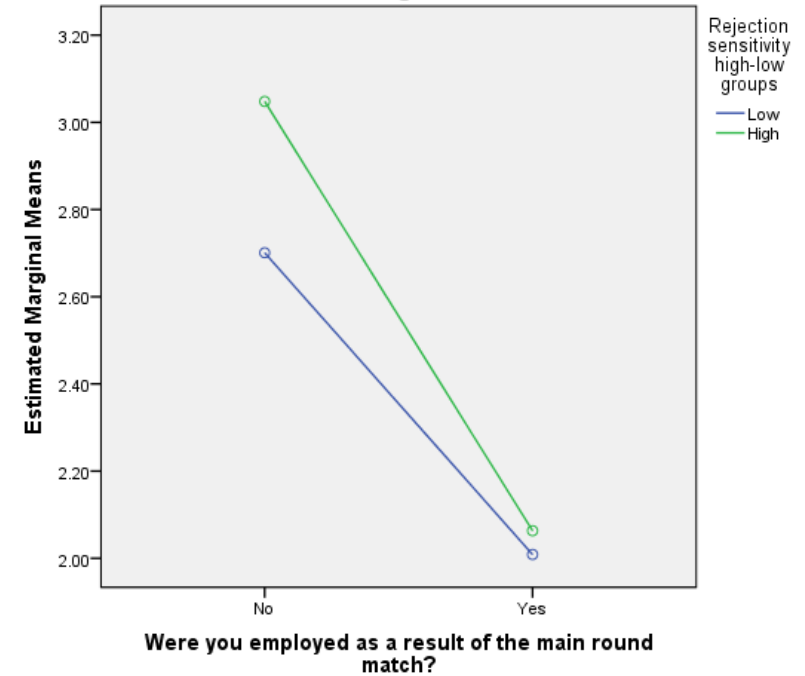
## Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being



Estimated Marginal Means of T2PASCAL



Estimated Marginal Means of T2NASCAL



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## Recommendations



### Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

- Test coping interventions to improve SWB after rejection/failure
- Test interventions specifically directed toward RS to buffer against low SWB after rejection/failure
- Test effects of other possible moderating variables
- Implement program into PD1
  - For all students before match
  - For vulnerable, unmatched students after main round
- Improve awareness of counselling services/increase social support



# Influence of Co-op and Reflection on Vocational Self-Concept

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## Introduction



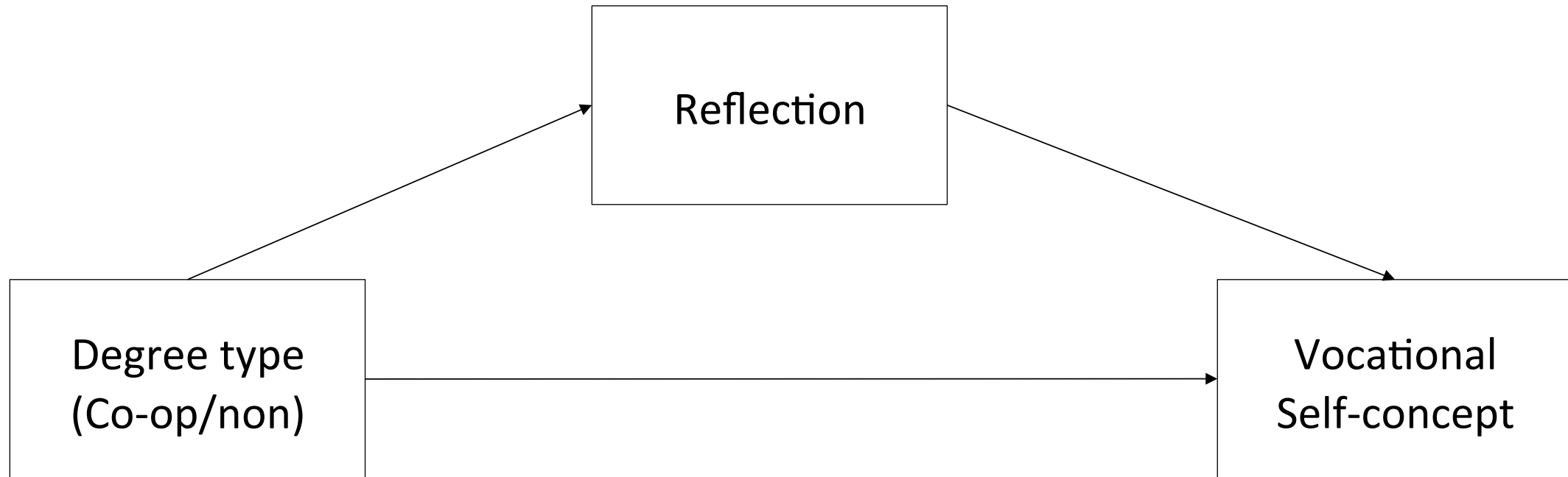
# Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

- Higher education plays an important role in preparing individuals for the workplace
- This might include helping individuals to form a clear vocational self-concept (VSC)
- There are many theories which try to explain how vocational self-concept is developed
- It is possible that co-op and other WIL programs may play a role in helping students to develop VSC

# Literature Review



## Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept





# Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

- 1,564 graduating students were surveyed in 2010, 2011, and 2013
- The survey measured the following constructs
  - Degree type
  - Reflection
  - Vocational self-concept
- Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS to examine the theoretical model

## Results



# Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

- The degree type had significant impact upon the development of vocational self-concept
- The degree type had significant positive influence on the amount of reflection a student did
- The amount of reflection a student engaged in had a positive impact on a student's vocational self-concept
- The amount of reflection partially mediated the effect of degree type on vocational self-concept

## Recommendations



### Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

- Institutions can support the development of VSC by reframing work experiences as learning experiences
- There should be continued use of reflective practice within both co-op and non-co-op curriculums
- For those in regular programs of study, educators can use academic contexts to facilitate reflection
- Journaling may be one way to enhance reflection on previous work experiences



# The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

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## Introduction



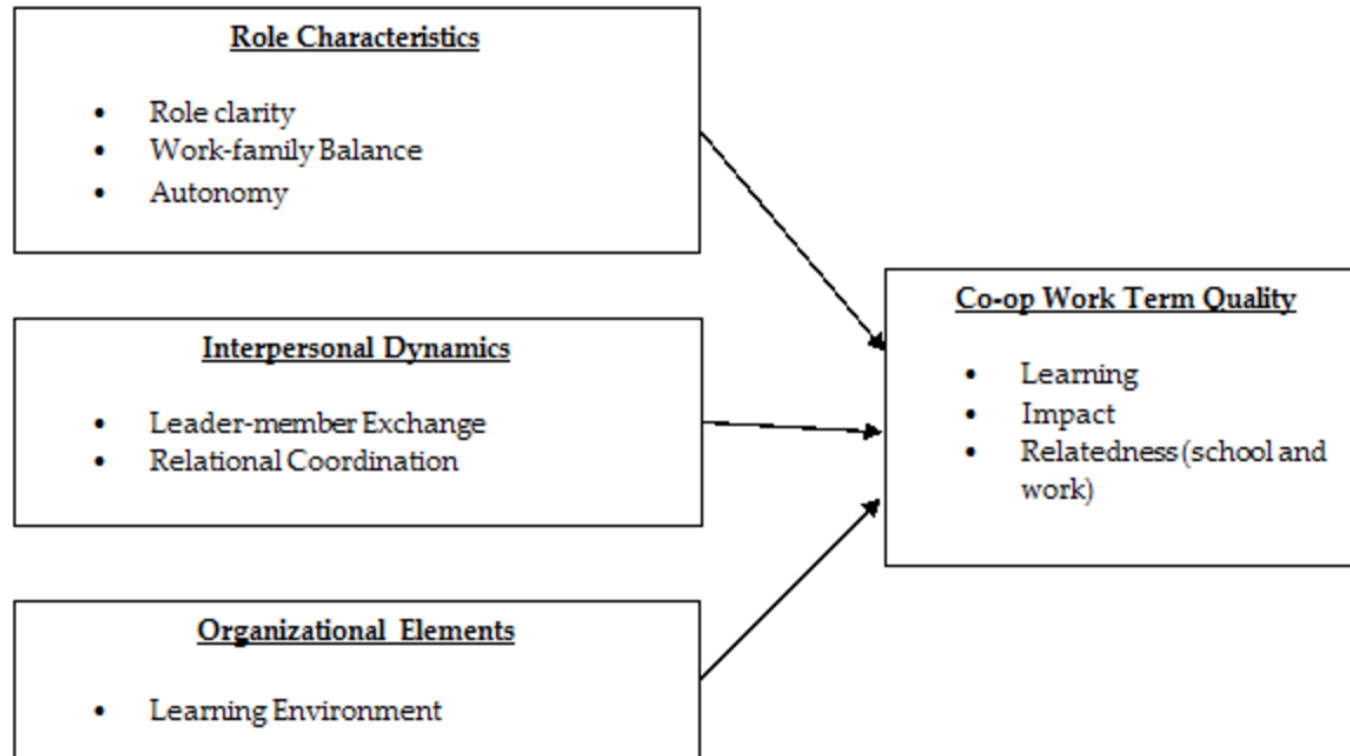
# The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

- Not all experiences are educative
- The quality of the co-op work term experience influences students' development
- Lack of research on the role of the work term in co-op student development
- Identifying the important attributes of a quality experience will help us to understand and manage students' work terms

# Literature Review



## The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences



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# The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

- 1,937 second, third, or fourth year co-op students were surveyed
- The survey measured the following constructs
  - Role clarity
  - Autonomy
  - Work-family balance
  - Leader-member exchange
  - Relational coordination
  - Learning environment
  - Co-op work-term quality
- Regression analyses were conducted using SPSS to examine the theoretical model

## Results



# The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

- Number of employees in team has no effect on perceptions of quality, but number of employees is negatively associated with quality
- Number of work terms positively associated with quality
- All three role characteristics (role clarity, work-family balance, and autonomy) were positively associated with quality
- Relational coordination but not leader-member exchange was positively associated with quality
- Learning environment was positively associated with quality

## Recommendations



### The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

- Employers should note what their employees look for in a high-quality work-term (i.e. learning, relatedness, impact)
- Supervisors should consider giving students more freedom and autonomy
- Future research could examine connection between co-op work term quality and student development



QUESTIONS?