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NICEC

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

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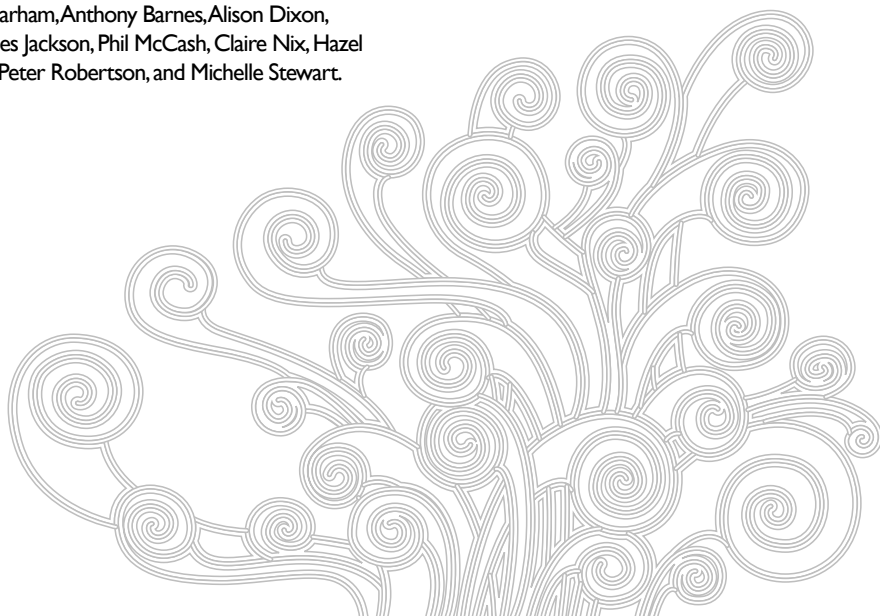
TITLE

The official title of the journal for citation purposes is *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* (Print *ISSN 2046-1348; online* ISSN 2059-4879). It is widely and informally referred to as 'the NICEC journal'. Its former title was *Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal*, ISSN 1472-6564, published by CRAC, and the final edition under this title was issue 25. To avoid confusion we have retained the numbering of editions used under the previous title.

AIMS AND SCOPE

The NICEC journal publishes articles on the broad theme of career development in any context including:

- Career development in the workplace: private and public sector, small, medium and large organisations, private practitioners.
- Career development in education: schools, colleges, universities, adult education, public career services.
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It is designed to be read by individuals who are involved in career development-related work in a wide range of settings including information, advice, counselling, guidance, advocacy, coaching, mentoring, psychotherapy, education, teaching, training, scholarship, research, consultancy, human resources, management or policy. The journal has a national and international readership.

Contents

Overview of this issue

We are delighted to offer an issue that brings together contributions from established academics, new writers and practitioner researchers. Our focus for April 2019 is twofold. Firstly, we have articles that are highly topical. Secondly, we have articles that highlight the career development issues facing under-researched and potentially disadvantaged groups.

There can be nothing more topical than Brexit: the topic that dominates conversations in the UK in the spring of 2019. **Marjorie McCrory and Theresa Thomson** explore the implications of this emotive political backdrop for the career aspirations of UK undergraduates. In recent times, careers work policy for schools in England has favoured a prominent role for employers, sometimes privileging their input over that of career guidance practitioners. **Ian McIntosh and Julia Yates** examine the evidence base for this policy and report an empirical study evaluating the impact of employers and career advisers on pupils. In the third of our topical articles, **Fiona Cobb** explores a technological theme: how 'big data' is bringing about a transformation of careers work in universities.

Moving on to under-researched groups, **Elysha Ramage** focuses on career decision making in a rural school setting in mainland Scotland. **Corinne Holden, Christian van Nieuwerburgh and Julia Yates** explore practitioners' perspectives of working with clients who are overweight, and the acute sensitivities in discussing the career implications of obesity. **Gill Frigerio and Rabia Nasimi** investigate the role of community organisations in supporting the career development of refugees.

Last, but not least, we offer two articles focusing on LGBT issues. **Adrian Hancock** explores the literature on the career development of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. **Kristan Hopkins and Liane Hambly** examine and question the perspectives on sexuality that practitioners bring to their work. Both articles challenge the heteronormative assumptions of our profession.

Pete Robertson & Lyn Barham, Editors

Erratum

The editors have received a correction in relation the following article from the October 2018 issue: 'Moving from information provision to co-careering: Integrated guidance as a new approach to e-guidance in Norway' by Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke, Erik Hagaseth Haug and Tristram Hooley.

The authors would like to amend the citation and references for the term co-careering (p. 52, para 2, line 4). The second half of line 4 should read '...Kettunen et al. (2015) and Kettunen (2017) use the term 'co-careering'.' The corrected references in the list are:

Kettunen, J. (2017). *Career practitioners´ conceptions of social media and competency for social media in career services*. Jyväskylä, Finland: University of Jyväskylä, Finnish Institute for Educational Research. Studies, 32. Dissertation. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-7160-1

Kettunen, J., Sampson, J.P., Jr., & Vuorinen, R. (2015). Career practitioners´ conceptions of competency for social media in career services. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 43*, 43-56. doi: 10.1080/03069885.2014.939945

The political is personal: Brexit and the career aspirations of UK undergraduates

Marjorie McCrory & Theresa Thomson

Findings from a small-scale qualitative research project exploring the impact of Brexit on the career aspirations of final year students at a UK university reveal the centrality of values and emotion in career decision-making. Although not conclusive or generalisable, these findings nevertheless demonstrate the impact of the wider context of the world we live in, and specifically, of political events, on perceptions of career and potential career choice. This presents a challenge to career development theorists and practitioners alike to adequately address and respond to the impact of the political in relation to career decision-making.

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Why study the impact of Brexit on graduate career choice?

In an era of global economic austerity and the rise of right-wing populism across Europe, the UK faces the considerable challenge of securing longer-term outcomes that are both economically and politically favourable. Lingering uncertainty around this process will almost certainly impact on both the perceptions and the material circumstances of UK graduates, as they contemplate their career options and embark upon their post-graduation careers. More generally, and of some significance in relation to our understanding of career decision-making, the 2016 Brexit referendum presents us with an opportunity to consider the effects of political events on individuals' perceptions of career, and challenges theorists and practitioners alike to consider whether adequate understandings of, and responses to, such events are sufficiently foregrounded in theory and practice. Here,

the authors seek to present the findings of this small-scale study as a means to stimulate further thinking and discussion around these broader issues.

There is no clear consensus on the likely impact of Brexit on graduate employment in the UK (Hobson, 2018; BBC News 2018). However, large-scale quantitative surveys of UK undergraduates, from predominantly Russell Group universities, suggest that up to three-quarters of graduates believe that it will be harder to find graduate-level employment as a result of the decision to leave the EU (Higher Fliers Research, 2017) and research by Trendence UK (as cited in Recruitment International, 2017), suggests that 77% of domestic students believe that there will be fewer opportunities to work or study overseas.

Methods

To explore the impact of this political event on graduates' career thinking, 15 in-depth individual interviews were conducted with final year domestic-domiciled undergraduates at the University of the West of England in Bristol, with participants drawn from a cross-section of degree programmes. (Participants were all UK nationals, age 21 to 26 years old, seven male and eight female.) The interviews were conducted from July until December in 2017, i.e. 12-18 months after the 2016 Brexit referendum result. It is important to note that the timing of the study was sufficiently close to the referendum result to capture participants' reactions, feelings and opinions relating to it. However, enough time had passed for participants to have digested the potential impact of the referendum result on their lives, particularly as they entered their final year of undergraduate study. Therefore, one may posit with reasonable confidence that the thoughts and opinions expressed during the research interviews were not merely 'knee jerk' emotional reactions in

the immediate aftermath of the referendum, but were more thoughtful reflections developed in the post-referendum period.

Findings

In brief, a thematic analysis of the interviews identified two broad, yet interrelated themes: a stronger emphasis being placed by participants on personal values and commitments when considering career choice, and anxiety about the future in an uncertain economy and potentially divided society. These findings can be seen to be directly attributable to the Brexit campaign and the referendum result. Significantly, we wish to argue that participants' expressions of emotion, and of the importance of personal values and commitments, signal career thinking that requires understandings and responses that adequately reflect the nature of the inter-relatedness of individual and social factors; that is, understandings and responses that grasp the generative power of socio-political circumstances and events in relation to career thinking, without diluting the creative and meaningful agency of individuals to respond to these events.

Brexit: values and commitments drive career thinking and action

Amongst participants, Brexit appeared to kindle a sense of both social purpose and personal responsibility in response to perceptions that the referendum had created, or exposed, social division:

> 'It's definitely made me more motivated to try and create a better society.' (Participant 9),

> 'Maybe before I was just, I want some job. But now it's, "What can I do? What can I contribute?" So it's probably made me a lot more passionate, but also more serious about it.' (Participant 7)

Participant 1 echoed these sentiments, suggesting that, though their career choice may not have changed, it meant something different now, and that would lead to a particular kind of engagement:

> 'I want to be a teacher, this kind of teacher, because of Brexit, I'd try and work where maybe

there are signs of this kind of division. I'd seek out the problem. I'm not sure if I'd succeed, but I'd at least try.'

One participant linked their career thinking clearly to broader identity issues, suggesting that their career ideas linked directly to enacting a vision of how the future should be:

> 'I don't want to be seen as that English person who has these beliefs and values, working in a place where this is all we are, this is England, this is how we'll stay. I'd want to work with people and try and open up the social boundaries.' (Participant 10)

Participants also linked their career thinking to broadening and deepening understandings of the place, and nature of work in their lives and in relation to society:

> 'It's made me realise that you can't just go and do a job, 9-5, earn your money, go home, because that's not how society changes for the better.' (Participant 4)

Brexit stress: uncertainty and anxiety reveal political career thinking

All 15 participants in this study construed the Brexit campaign and referendum result as having been a negative experience, characterised as revealing a divided country, which they believed would be perceived as unwelcoming and isolated:

> 'I thought we were doing so well, and then people mass supported something I thought we'd overcome. With Trump, and with Brexit…it's just lowered the bar.' (Participant 4)

> 'I thought we were better. I thought we were a progressive country.' (Participant 15)

More specifically, participants identified issues relating to intolerance of diversity and a form of isolationism as alienating:

> 'Not that I would argue that everyone's a racist, or that everyone's intolerant, but it definitely

does feel like a sort of cultural isolationism going on in the UK. There's some sort of regression going on, an intolerance towards migrants. And I think maybe Brexit didn't create that, but it definitely revealed it. Or maybe legitimised it.' (Participant 9)

For some participants, these issues related quite directly to career thinking:

> 'The impact it will have on me specifically is that I won't look for work in the UK and I won't continue my studies in the UK.' (Participant 6)

> 'I don't want to live in a place where those values aren't existing or they're going backwards. So that's definitely pushed me away. So I don't think I'll live in England. I would live in England if we stayed in the EU.' (Participant 9)

Anger, frustration and a sense of confusion were palpable in the interviews:

> 'Brexit, and then the Trump vote, and then the last general election, it just seems to be cascading massive amounts of civil unrest, where it's "Do I really want to be in a state where I can see things potentially collapsing?" It begs the question, "Is this a state that I want to reside in? Or pay taxes into anymore, when it can't do its main purpose of keeping civilisation unrest as low as possible?" It's certainly a consequence of the political climate we're in.' (Participant 7)

As well as anger, a sense of sadness was expressed by participants and this was expressed quite directly in relation to the individual's relationship with society and their place in it:

> 'It makes me upset because I feel excluded a little bit from society.' (Participant 6)

> 'It's just a world I don't want to have to live in because it seems to be going back, you know, five steps.' (Participant 3)

At a time when there are increasing numbers of students in higher education reporting mental health issues (Universities UK, 2018), these sentiments are clearly concerning, and participants expressed specific anxieties when talking about the future:

> 'It's all like is everything going to go wrong now? That sort of sensation.' (Participant 4).

> 'This world that I'm going to be an adult in, that I'm going to be working in, that I'm going to be bringing my own children into, is it going to be a very secure one? I was nervous, I must say.' (Participant 11)

Anxiety was also evident when participants reflected more specifically on their likely future job prospects:

> 'I think it's made people a bit more stressed out. There's more confusion and people are getting panicked. I think it's because of the uncertainty. People at university keep going on about it. Because it's brought up in the news so often, it's always at the forefront of the discussion of things.' (Participant 14)

Although it was acknowledged that Brexit 'might make finding a job harder' (Participant 2), the concern expressed by a few participants was not so much about lack of job opportunities in the UK, but more about their perception of restricted opportunities to live and work in Europe:

> 'I never really thought about it, but then as soon as the door was closed off, it was almost noticeable that I had that opportunity, I had some bridge into Europe. Now a lot of those doors have been closed off.' (Participant 1)

Uncertainty about future opportunities caused particular anxiety:

> 'You don't know what they're doing, so you can't really be worried about the implications of what they are doing. They don't seem to know. That's more unnerving than worrying about something concrete, isn't it?' (Participant 1)

> 'I feel that if I worry about it now, I'll be completely stressed out.' (Participant 14)

Some recognised that adaptability and a positive mind-set would be needed:

> 'It's about being adaptable and…resilient to the change.' (Participant 8)

This sentiment was echoed by participant 10;

> 'Things change, people change. The world is ever changing.'

Surprisingly perhaps, given the overwhelmingly negative view of the referendum result, there was some cautious optimism amongst participants. This too reflected participants' concerns with values and commitments:

> 'Jobs are out there, and they are jobs where an impact can be made.' (Participant 8),

> 'The world is still going to need teachers and childcare workers. That's not going to go away because we've left the EU.' (Participant 11)

Towards the end of the interviews, a few participants sounded more hopeful about the personal impact of Brexit:

> 'Martin Lewis, the money-saving expert guy, he predicts that in the long term, we might be better off.' (Participant 13)

> 'Maybe it's time for a change?' (Participant 5)

It is perhaps worth noting, in light of these more hopeful statements, that the interviewer did consider the potentially therapeutic aspects of the research interview in the context of what were emotionally charged, and sometimes quite upsetting, discussions. Although not a focus of this paper, this possibility suggests some potentially significant connections between research interviewing and therapeutic interventions that are directly relevant not only to research practice, but also to career guidance and development practice (Amundson, 2003; McCrory and O'Donnell, 2016).

The political is personal

The politics of career guidance is generally discussed in relation to a number of key agendas, including the impact of policy regimes on service delivery and practice. In addition, the salience of class and opportunity structures (including welfare regimes) in relation to career perception and career choice is well understood (Hooley and Barham, 2016;

Roberts, 2009) and issues relating to the geographical aspects of labour markets have complexified our understanding of structural 'determinants' (Alexander, 2018). More recently, issues of social justice have been widely discussed in relation to policy agendas and service delivery as well as in relation to the mechanics of service delivery and practice (Hooley, 2015; Thomsen, 2017). Arguably, discussions around the relationship between career guidance practice and conceptualisations of social justice come closest to addressing the issues that we seek to highlight here; specifically, the need to address the ways in which individual decision-making is, in some meaningful sense, always inherently *social* and, by extension, *political*. Such a focus would suggest a need to work with individuals without assuming their 'individuation' (Marx, 1973).

Expressions of values and commitments shed some further light on this issue. Far from being mere abstract idealisations, the value positions expressed by participants in this study connect quite directly with decision-making and action, and it is in this sense that creative individual responses to political events represent meaningful agency, albeit of a limited kind. We do not seek to argue that individuals can *individually* overcome structural constraints, but we do seek to encourage further dialogue around the extent to which individual decisions and actions, propelled by commitments to 'visions of the future' may lead us to a fuller understanding of the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social (and, by extension, the political) which may form a more robust basis for meaningfully theorising career (Stetsenko, 2015).

Brexit: a wake-up call for career guidance?

If the findings from this study can be considered as potentially relevant to the experiences of students from other universities, these could be interesting times for career guidance practitioners working in higher education. If we accept that our students' engagement in their world is a critical one, where any potential future action related to career is directed by their values and commitments, this opens up the opportunity for practitioners to revisit their practice in order to develop potentially more challenging

strategies as the basis for career conversations. There may be some justification for spending time exploring clients' personal values and how these relate to potential career choice. We may also wish to consider the importance of managing the emotional impact of career decision-making in a world that seems to constantly change and may often feel alienating. Of course, as Thomsen and others have suggested, it may be that practice needs to shift from its preoccupation with individual success towards a more empowering community model. As wider access to graduate opportunities remains variable at best, it may become important for practitioners to engage more explicitly with the politics of career; to explore with students not only how to navigate and survive the world of work that *is*, but how they would like their world of work to *become*.

Although practitioners 'may feel unsure about adopting a political position and [be] concerned about the ethics of passing on their own beliefs to clients' (Hooley, 2015, p.14), a model of guidance that actively recognises the importance of political context in career decision-making may be the most appropriate in a world increasingly characterised by economic and political uncertainty.

To date, career guidance theory and practice has tended to promote an individualistic approach to career decision making. In higher education, the drive to achieve positive graduate outcomes may have resulted in an approach that is primarily concerned with 'recruitability' (Grey, 2018), and that favours those who are emotionally tough enough and can win in the competition for graduate jobs. Despite widening participation initiatives by universities, inequalities in the labour market remain largely unchallenged and careers guidance practice has generally shied away from engaging with socio-political context. A blended approach to careers guidance is needed if we wish to have these more challenging career conversations; an approach that retains a focus on the individual (e.g. *who am I? what motivates me? what do I want to achieve in life?*) but does not isolate the individual aspects of experience from the broader socio-political realities that shape, constrain and enable both the material realities of experience and the creative imagination (e.g. *what sort of society do I want to live in? what do I want to change? how could I be a part of that change?*).

Not every student will want to change the world. However, every student, in some meaningful sense, will contribute to change in their world, even as a result of their ongoing engagement in what may appear to be the mundane or everyday. Graduate clients, like other clients, will be seeking a life that fits with their values and aspirations; with their commitments to an imagined future.

'Brexit really woke me up!' were the words of one participant in this study. Perhaps Brexit could also be part of a wake-up call for career guidance practice. If we believe that the next graduate generation is to take up the challenge of helping to create a more socially just society, then practitioners may need to be prepared to play their part too, and that may mean foregrounding in practice the political in both its personal and social dimensions.

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Evaluating employer career interventions in English schools

Ian McIntosh & Julia Yates

Government policy on English schools' careers activities indicates an emphasis on employer interventions over traditional career guidance. A literature review suggested that the impact of employer interventions on students' career learning was less fully researched than that of traditional guidance. This study evaluates and compares the impact of career guidance interviews and selected employer careers interventions. Using a pre-test – post-test quantitative methodology (n=233) to measure the interventions' effects on different career learning outcomes, the study suggests that vocational guidance interviews are more effective than employer interventions at enhancing the vocational identity and decision-making self-efficacy of year 10 and 11 students.

Introduction

Historically, employers' involvement in schools' career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) activities was only 'supplementary, complementary and alternative' (Stanley & Mann, 2014, p. 38); in particular employers were not generally involved in providing career guidance. This changed from 2014 onwards, with the UK Government stating that 'Employers are integral to great careers advice' (Department for Education, 2017, p.10), and statutory guidance requiring schools in England to 'ensure real-world connections with employers lie at the heart of the careers strategy' (Department for Education, 2018, p. 22). Encounters with employers and the workplace comprise two of the Gatsby Foundation's eight benchmarks of good careers guidance (Holman, 2014), which are endorsed by Government. There is also one benchmark related

to 'opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser'. This policy of affording employers the prime role in schools' CEIAG programmes has been criticised, notably for setting up a 'false polarity… between employer engagement and career adviser interviews' (Watts, 2014, p. 3) and ignoring their 'distinctive and complementary' benefits (Careers Sector Stakeholder Alliance, 2014, p. 2).

There has been a debate about the relative roles of employer interventions and traditional career guidance in schools' CEIAG programmes, but research examining the relative impact of each type of intervention is limited. This article reports the results of a study which explores and compares the different career learning benefits of the two approaches. We will briefly summarise the relevant literature on the benefits of career guidance interviews and employer events, introduce the research project and the results, and then discuss their possible implications.

Literature review

Career guidance interviews

The range of career activities found in secondary schools is broad (Hooley, Marriott, Watts & Coiffait, 2012) but at the heart of many CEIAG programmes lies a guidance interview with a career practitioner (Gibson, Oliver & Dennison, 2015). In a recent literature review, Everitt, Neary, Delgardo and Clark (2018) conclude that whilst the evidence base is not robust, personal guidance seems to have a positive impact on a range of outcomes, including personal effectiveness (e.g. self-awareness and self-esteem), career readiness (e.g. career planning and career decision making) and educational outcomes (e.g. improved attendance and attainment). The authors' conclusions echo the results of a meta-analysis (Whiston, Sexton & Lasoff, 1998) which attests to the

benefits of guidance interviews in schools, highlighting as a key learning outcome the development of the self-concept. Similarly, a more recent meta-analysis (Whiston, Li, Mitts & Wright, 2017) demonstrates the significant effect sizes associated with personal career guidance counselling.

Employer engagement

There is evidence that employer engagement is associated with improved longer-term labour market outcomes (Percy & Mann, 2014), such as higher wages (Kashefpakdel & Percy, 2016). These positive outcomes may reflect wider benefits of employer engagement conceptualised by Stanley and Mann (2014) as improved human capital (employability skills and academic attainment), social capital (personal connections with employers) and cultural capital (raised aspirations and broadened perspectives). However, this evidence of improved labour market outcomes and analysis of improved human, social and cultural capital contrasts with a relative lack of evidence on the effects of employer engagement on career learning. Mann and Dawkins (2014a, 2014b) identify employer careers fairs as specifically designed to support students' career thinking. They are widely used in schools (Bimrose et al., 2014) and are specifically endorsed by the UK Government (Department for Education, 2018). Mann, Dawkins and McKeown (2017) report that teachers consider careers fairs to be the single most effective employer intervention for high achieving students and among the most effective in helping students understand both the world of work and what is needed to get jobs. In what we believe to be the only report measuring the impact of a careers fair, Kolodinsky et al. (2006) reported that a half-day career fair caused a strong short-term increase in the occupational self-efficacy of US adolescents. But the impact of careers fairs is somewhat under-researched (Careers & Enterprise Company, 2016).

Comparing interventions

Research comparing a range of different types of career interventions in general terms highlights the value of personal guidance. A 1988 meta-analysis (Oliver & Spokane, 1988) concluded that individual guidance was the most effective career intervention per hour, but that a greater aggregate effect-per-

hour was obtained (because of the larger number of subjects involved) through classroom activities and, to a lesser extent, structured workshops. Whiston, Brechstein and Stevens (2003) compared a range of interventions' effects on different outcomes, concluding that practitioner-free interventions were generally less effective than practitioner interventions, and these findings were echoed in Whiston's more recent meta-analysis (Whiston et al., 2017) which suggested that personal guidance had larger effect sizes than other types of interventions. The importance of practitioner involvement has been emphasised by Savard and Michaud (2005), who reported that labour market information (LMI) had virtually no impact on young people's career development unless transmitted through a practitioner, because the complexity of unmediated LMI made it difficult for young people to process.

Empirical evidence directly comparing the effectiveness of employer interventions and guidance interviews is very limited (Stanley & Mann, 2014), but the views of young people in schools in the UK have been examined. Mann and Dawkins (2014b) found that 'young people interact with employers in very different ways to school staff' (p. 4). Other research found young people perceived employers' career support as 'more genuine', 'from experience', 'straight' and 'trusted…as opposed to a career adviser or teacher 'telling' you what to do' (Jones & Mann, 2014, slide 16).

These findings – that young people find employers' information more impactful than careers advisers' – may be explained by research into the cognitive mechanisms used by young people to process information and make decisions. The tendency for decision-makers to ascribe greater value to information from trusted personal contacts and direct experience - 'hot' information - than abstract or official 'cold' information (first identified by Ball & Vincent, 1998) has also been widely observed in young people's career decision making (Archer, 2000). Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) found that students placed a greater premium on 'experiential information' (including face-to-face contact with outside visitors such as employers) than paper-based information. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1999) also observed that whereas guidance interviews tend to explore the personal choices learners bring to the

discussion, employer presentations introduce possible occupations, including previously 'invisible' jobs.

The evidence then supports the view that the two types of career intervention each offer important but complementary benefits (Watts, 2014). Employer interventions may broaden young people's awareness of opportunities more than guidance interviews, but other research suggests that guidance interviews may help young people to process information more effectively than employer interventions. For example, the wide range of occupations represented at careers fairs is likely to mean that learners will find at least some of the occupations irrelevant to them personally. This is significant because students process occupational information less effectively where the occupations are not highly relevant to them personally (Parr & Neimeyer, 1994). The challenge of identifying the most relevant information is compounded by the overall volume of information available at a careers fair (Sweller, 1988). Extraneous cognitive load is further increased by information which is irrelevant to them personally (the 'redundancy effect' risk – Yeung, Jin & Sweller, 1998). Applying these concepts to a careers fair it is easy to envisage students being hindered in processing relevant careers fair information by both the volume of information and the proportion which is irrelevant. The lack of practitioner support (identified as important by Savard & Michaud, 2005) is also unhelpful.

Finally, employer representatives might be expected to focus on positive aspects of their occupations, whereas a practitioner in a guidance interview should be balanced, also discussing occupations' negative aspects. That could further lead us to expect poorer decision making from careers fairs, because people differentiate between occupations more effectively using mixed occupational information than with purely positive information (Haase, Reed, Winer & Bodden, 1979).

We see then that the literature contains evidence of the career learning impacts of personal guidance interviews with career practitioners and the general benefits of employer engagement. However, research (and quantitative research in particular) specifically on the career learning impacts of employer interventions, both generally and in comparison with personal guidance, is not well developed. It is this gap in the literature which this current research addresses, comparing the career learning impacts of a traditional guidance interview with two employer interventions; a careers fair and a careers fair supported by classroom workshops (wraparounds).

Method

Participants

The research was carried out in nine state schools in the Leeds region during the 2014/5 school year, using an independent samples design. Each intervention was evaluated in three of the nine schools, with schools allocated between intervention groups to make the groups as equivalent as practicable. Three of the schools surveyed year 10 students (14-15 years old); the other six surveyed year 11 students (15-16 years old). Students were randomly selected for participation, except that the year 10 students who received a guidance interview were all selected as requiring additional targeted career support to prime them for their forthcoming year 11 CEIAG programme.

Measures

The study compared the three interventions by assessing their impact on three different career learning outcomes, using well-established instruments to measure each, as follows.

- Vocational identity ('a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, and talents' – Holland, Daiger & Power, 1980, p. 1) was measured with 15 questions from the vocational identity sub-section of My Vocational Situation (Holland et al., 1980).

- Opportunity awareness ('knowing what work opportunities exist and their entry requirements' – Hillage & Pollard, 1988, p. 2) was assessed using five questions from the 'Amount of Information' and 'Satisfaction with Information' subscales in the Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf, Colarelli & Hartmann, 1983).

- Career Decision-making Self-efficacy (decision-making) - a measure of subjects' confidence that they can successfully make and implement

career choices - was measured by 20 questions from the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (Betz, Klein & Taylor, 1996).

These three career learning outcomes represent the self-awareness, opportunity awareness and decision learning elements of the widely-used DOTS framework for what should be learned from a career education programme (Law & Watts, 1977). They also correspond to the three core general areas of the Career Development Institute Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education (Career Development Institute, 2015). They are therefore familiar to English schools. They are also more proximate to the interventions than other outcomes such as labour market destinations or earnings.

The three instruments were judged appropriate for this age group and UK terms were substituted for American ones (e.g. 'CV' for 'resume'). The questions were identical in the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys.

Interventions

Schools were given guidelines to promote consistency within each intervention type. Guidance interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes, and careers fairs 75 and 120 minutes. At careers fairs each employer had a small stand for students to visit. Wraparounds were led by careers practitioners. The first wraparound prepared students for the careers fair by discussing the employers and the kinds of discussions students might have with them. The wraparound after the careers fair helped students reflect on the information gleaned from the fair and their next steps. Wraparounds lasted around 20 to 45 minutes.

Procedure

Surveys were completed and collected in sealed envelopes within two school days either side of the intervention. Participants had no other career intervention between the first and second surveys. The research was carried out in accordance with applicable ethics requirements. It proved impracticable for schools to set up procedures to pair individual students' pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys. In addition, absences and exclusions meant that most schools reported smaller numbers of students completing post-intervention surveys than pre-intervention surveys. Table 1 shows the number of students returning pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys in each intervention group, by school year and gender.

Table 1: Numbers of students returning pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys

Group		Year 10 Students		Year 11 Students		Total Students	
		Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
guidance interview	Male	18	18	26	19	44	37
	Female	18	18	23	14	41	32
	Total	36	36	49	33	85	69
careers fair	Male	-	-	30	30	30	30
	Female	-	-	58	45	58	45
	Total	-	-	88	75	88	75
fair/wrap-around	Male	18	17	18	11	36	28
	Female	56	50	10	11	66	61
	Total	74	67	28	22	102	89
Total	Male	36	35	74	60	110	95
	Female	74	68	91	70	165	138
	Total	110	103	165	130	275	233

Cronbach's alpha scores were above 0.80 for all the pre-intervention and post-intervention results, suggesting good reliability.

Data analysis

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the effectiveness of the different interventions. The independent variable was the type of intervention (guidance interview, careers fair, fair/wraparound) and the dependent variables were the scores on the three measures (vocational identity, opportunity awareness and decision-making) after the interventions. Participants' pre-intervention scores on the three measures were used as the covariates in this analysis.

Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes and reliable measurement of the covariate.

Results

Pupils' scores on all three career learning outcomes (vocational identity, opportunity awareness and decision-making) increased following all three career interventions. The guidance interview group reported benefits in both vocational identity and decision-making which were significantly greater than those reported by the other intervention groups, indicating that the guidance interviews were more effective than the employer interventions in increasing vocational identity and decision-making for these students.

After adjusting for pre-intervention scores, a significant difference was found between the intervention groups on post-intervention scores $F_{(6,402)} = 15.09$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' Lambda = .67, partial η^2 = .18. This means that the nature of the intervention (guidance interview, careers fair or fair/wraparound) had an effect on the participants' scores as measured after the intervention. The effect was small, estimated to account for 18% of the overall variance in the scores.

The guidance interview students recorded post-intervention vocational identity scores significantly higher than both the careers fair students (mean difference between groups of 3.31, $p<0.001$) and the fair/wraparound group (mean difference

between groups of 3.25, $p<0.001$). This suggests that the guidance interview students experienced a greater increase in vocational identity following the intervention than the other groups' students. The effect size was small (partial η^2 = .25), suggesting that the nature of the intervention explained 25% of the overall variance between the groups.

The scores for decision-making after the guidance interview were also significantly higher than those after the careers fair (mean difference 6.73, $p<0.001$) and the fair/wraparound (mean difference 4.20, $p<0.05$), according to post hoc comparisons after controlling for the covariates of the pre-intervention scores. This indicates that the guidance interview students experienced a greater increase in decision-making following the intervention than the other groups' students. The effect size was small (partial η^2 = .1) suggesting that the intervention explained 10% of the overall variance between the groups.

There were no significant differences reported between the groups' opportunity awareness scores after the three interventions.

Table 2 presents the mean pre-intervention scores and the adjusted mean post-intervention scores when the covariate of pre-intervention scores are controlled for.

Discussion

This study shows that all three interventions (guidance interview, careers fair and fair/wraparound) improved each of the selected learning outcomes (vocational identity, opportunity awareness and decision-making). But whilst opportunity awareness was improved by guidance interviews and employer-centred careers fairs to the same degree, the guidance interview appears to have been a more effective mechanism for developing young people's vocational identity and decision-making than careers fairs. This is consistent with the meta-analysis findings of Oliver & Spokane (1988), Whiston et al. (2003) and Whiston et al. (2017) that individual career counselling has more impact than other interventions.

Vocational identity

It is perhaps not surprising that guidance interviews outperform careers fairs most strongly on vocational

Outcome	Intervention Group	Mean Pre-Intervention Score	Adjusted Mean Post-intervention Score	Standard Error
Vocational identity	guidance interview		11.57	.32
	careers fair	6.53	8.26	.37
	fair/wraparound		8.32	.28
Opportunity awareness	guidance interview		17.96	.36
	careers fair	14.19	16.78	.4
	fair/wraparound		17.37	.31
Decision-making	guidance interview		77.12	.93
	careers fair	64.31	70.39	1.05
	fair/wraparound		72.92	.82

Table 2: Adjusted means

identity. As noted above, a guidance interview is centred on individual students' personal circumstances and choices, with trained career practitioners encouraging them to make links from their goals and talents to the workplace. By contrast, careers fairs are structured to present occupational information, with less opportunity for dialogue about individuals' personal characteristics.

Decision-making

Decision-making refers to individuals' belief that they can process careers information and make personal choices. Careers fairs are likely to present a large amount of information, to broaden students' horizons, but with some of the occupations presented being irrelevant to individual students. This could lead to cognitive overload, making it hard for students to process the information (Parr & Neimeyer, 1994; Sweller, 1988; Yeung et al., 1998). By contrast, guidance interviews are likely to include a focus on identifying preferences from the range of opportunities discussed (Yates, 2013). Secondly, one would expect that while careers fair employers would promote opportunities positively, a guidance interview would be more balanced, discussing negative aspects of opportunities

as well as positives. Haase et al.'s (1979) findings indicate that the guidance interview's more balanced approach should help participants to differentiate between occupations more effectively. Finally, the conclusion that a careers practitioner-led guidance interview appears to support higher levels of decision-making is also consistent with Savard and Michaud's (2005) finding that career practitioner involvement is essential for young people to interpret occupational information.

Opportunity awareness

As discussed, careers fairs are structured to introduce students to a wide range of employers and opportunities, presented positively and with real-life impact by people working in those roles. By contrast the opportunities discussed at a guidance interview may be fewer in number, and lack the impact provided by a real-life employer, but they should be more relevant, and discussed with more balance, than at a careers fair. This study suggests that these different features of guidance interviews and careers fairs offer similar levels of opportunity awareness benefit, and that wraparounds do not improve the performance of careers fairs significantly in this respect.

Implications for policy and practice

This study assessed only career learning outcomes, and not the wider human, social and cultural capital benefits of employer interventions discussed above. But the study does suggest that employer interventions are not as effective as guidance interviews in helping students develop their vocational identity and decision-making. Policy should therefore recognise the complementary benefits of guidance interviews and employer engagement so that students not only benefit from interactions with employers, but are individually supported in interpreting employers' real-life occupational information and assimilating it into their own context and developing their vocational identity and decision-making.

Study limitations

This study was a field experiment, and as such there were a number of variables which could not be controlled for, as described below. Table 1 shows most groups reported differences between the numbers of pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, with reductions in the numbers post-intervention surveys (a 14% reduction overall and similar reductions across the three interventions). It was not possible to ensure that the careers fairs and wraparounds had exactly identical structures or timings, because they were designed to meet the different student groups' and schools' individual circumstances.

Conclusion

This study indicates that whilst employer interventions in the form of careers fairs appear to have a positive impact, vocational identity and decision-making could be better served by guidance interviews. But each type of intervention is merely one component in a CEIAG programme. There is a widely argued view (e.g. Hooley et al., 2012) that the effectiveness of schools' CEIAG programmes is determined not so much by individual interventions, but rather how different interventions are connected together in a curriculum-wide approach, with each intervention deployed to develop career learning outcomes in the most effective sequence. Reflecting that view, further work is needed to evaluate different combinations of employer interventions and guidance interviews within

a curriculum, exploring for instance their impacts on students of different ages, whether in combination or individually. It is hoped that the findings of this study open up a valuable methodology allowing policy-makers and practitioners to better understand various interventions' different effects and so design CEIAG programmes which use the most appropriate interventions in the most effective sequences.

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'There's no going back': The transformation of HE careers services using big data

Fiona Cobb

The capacity for UK Higher Education (HE) careers and employability services to collect and analyse career thinking and employability enhancing experience data – Careers Registration data - has provided unprecedented insight into levels of student career planning, (work) experience gained, and sectors of interest. This article draws on the research findings from the Careers Registration learning gain pilot project, to identify the ways in which careers and employability delivery has fundamentally changed since the introduction of Careers Registration, and considers the impact of big data for the future of HE careers and employability delivery.

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Big data in a higher education context

The 'volume, variety and velocity' (Shacklock 2016, p. 2) with which we are generating data in higher education is increasing. Throughout a student lifecycle, universities collect vast amounts of 'static' and 'fluid' data (Shacklock, 2016, p. 2). Static data is collected at regular scheduled points. Examples of static data in HE include: student data (collected at registration, including socio-demographic information and course details); student loans data; the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Survey (DLHE), and the National Student Survey (NSS), which collect information on employment and outcomes of graduates six months after graduation, and opinions on course quality respectively. Other examples include graduation surveys, which capture students' career thinking and plans at the point of graduation, and the Employability Health Check (EHC). The EHC is a comprehensive

questionnaire designed to help students find out how their employability skills are developing as they progress through their course, and identify areas to work on.

Learners are leaving behind a 'digital footprint' (Long & Siemens, 2011, p. 32), generating 'fluid' data through everyday digital interactions. Such data include swipe card data (swiping into lectures and/ or events), logins to virtual learning environments (VLEs) (Shacklock, 2016), library checkouts, and careers service engagement data, (e.g. appointments, careers fair attendance, employability award completion). HE institutions are in the midst of a 'data explosion' (Long & Siemens, 2011, p. 32). Data is no longer a by-product of HE activities, instead data has a central role in HE decision making. The use of technology to capture, process, and analyse information to enable informed decision-making provides value and meaning to big data (Daniel, 2017). Data and analytics help to reform HE activities, to assist educators to improve teaching and learning, and to motivate and encourage students by providing them with information relating to their own performance in relation to their peers, or progress towards personal goals (Long & Siemens, 2011).

In what ways might big data and analytics enable us to track and support students to develop their employability during their time in higher education? The three most important predictors of graduates moving into professional or managerial roles three years after graduation are having a plan; having done some research; having a targeted approach to job applications; and having undertaken unpaid work experience (Shury, Vivian, Turner & Downing, 2017). Big data and technology-based approaches enable universities to identify these predictors and their

prevalence much earlier in the student lifecycle, which can support employability outcomes of current students (Shury et al, 2017).

The increase in tuition fees and the introduction of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) by UK Government in 2016, has placed HE institutions under additional pressure to demonstrate how well HE institutions ensure excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate level employment or further study (BIS, 2016; Winter, 2018). Many UK HE careers services are taking a data informed approach to decision making and improving careers and employability delivery by utilising relevant datasets (Shah & Welch, 2018; Riding & Crowe, 2018). Sources of data include DLHE data, Careers Service Management Systems (CSMS) data (such as TargetConnect, Careerhub and Abintegro), student records data, careers service engagement data, and Careers Registration data. Leveraging these datasets allows university careers and employability services to meet internal and external demands for insight into student journeys, progression and outcomes.

Careers Registration

The Careers Registration methodology, introduced at the University of Leeds in 2012 (Gilworth & Thambar, 2013), consists of asking students to self-report their subjective state of career readiness and to record objective actions in the form of a range of employability-enhancing activities such as undertaking an internship, completing an employability award, or undertaking part time work related to career plans. This includes both cognitive and behavioural development and is based on concepts such as vocational maturity (Super & Kidd, 1979), career success (Ng et al, 2005), and career adaptability (Savickas, 1997; Bimrose & Brown, 2015). The questions are embedded in the enrolment questionnaire completed by every student at the start of each year of study. This method of collecting data captures a small amount of cognitive and behavioural information on virtually every student within an institution. Collecting data on all students as opposed to surveying only the engaged students enables a better and more representative understanding of student needs. Careers Registration can therefore be useful in identifying the differential career development of various student groups.

The uptake of Careers Registration across the UK HE sector is widespread, with 62 UK HEIs implementing the methodology at November 2017, according to a survey of 186 UK HE careers professionals. Careers Registration is an example of how big data (a large scale, linkable, and longitudinally trackable data set) can inform decision-making and support evidence-based practice in a higher education careers and employability setting.

Figure 1: Career thinking question

What stage are you at in your career planning? Please choose from the options below, the response which most closely related to your current position.

Statement	Category
I am not ready to start thinking about my career yet	*Decide*
I have no career ideas yet but want to start thinking	*Decide*
I have some ideas about my career and I am ready to start planning	*Decide*
I have a career in mind and intend to gain relevant work experience	*Plan*
I know what I want to do but not sure how to get there	*Plan*
I want to spend a year gaining experience	*Plan*
I am ready to apply for graduate level/professional opportunities	*Compete*
I am ready to apply for further study	*Compete*
I have been applying for opportunities and so far I have not been successful	*Compete*
I have a job, further study or my own business plan confirmed	*Sorted*

Career readiness learning gain

The RAND review (McGrath, Hoareau, Harte, Frearson & Manville, 2015) defined learning gain as the 'distance travelled', or the 'difference between the skills, competencies, content knowledge and personal development demonstrated by students at two points in time' (McGrath et al, 2015, p. xi). 'Work-readiness' was a key area of interest in the RAND review of learning gain in the UK, and Careers Registration was identified as a potential measure of career readiness learning gain (Mcgrath et.al, 2015). In 2015 a consortium of 15 UK universities secured funding for a three-year project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to investigate Careers Registration as a potential measure of career readiness learning gain. For the purposes of the research, employability is defined as students' capacity to make well-informed, realistic plans for their future career and their ability to acquire the resources that enable them to execute these plans and successfully manage their career development in a changing world.

Careers Registration learning gain pilot project

The Careers Registration learning gain pilot project concluded in October 2018. The primary aim of this

research was to assess whether Careers Registration can allow us to:

- Track learning gain (distance travelled) in relation to career readiness and employability of students during their time in higher education
- Predict employment outcomes for graduates
- Investigate the extent to which students are engaged in activities that enhance their employability
- Evaluate the effectiveness of employability strategies and interventions
- Investigate practical issues related to the implementation of Careers Registration within institutions
- Understand the extent to which the data it provides could inform institutional strategies for careers and employability support.

Research methodology

Fifteen partner institutions implemented Careers Registration at different points over the three-year project. Institutions utilised the two core Careers Registration questions (career readiness, and employability enhancing experience) along with additional questions on sectors of interest, future plans, and enterprise. The statements of the career readiness

Figure 2: Choose ONE or MORE statements from the following regarding employability enhancing experience you have undertaken in the last 12 months:

Work experience	Careers engagement	Mentoring	Pre course experience	Skills awards/ competitions	Volunteering/ positions of responsibility
Institutionally sourced: a placement year during my degree	I have attended a departmental careers event	I have been a mentor	Full time work prior to my course (two years of less)	Institutional employability award	Committee member of a society or club
Self sourced: holiday job unpaid internship paid internship part time work alongside my studies related/not to my career plans Self employed/ running my own business	I have attended a one to one careers appointment	I have been a mentee	Full time work prior to my course (more than two years)	I am undertaking the Higher Education Achievement report (HEAR)	Volunteering in my local community

question were categorised into four key phases of career readiness: *Decide, Plan, Compete* and *Sorted*. Responses to the employability enhancing experience question were analysed under a specially devised framework (Figure 2), where institutions included unique options pertaining to their student populations. The research applied the Gilworth (2017) definition of employability as 'the capability to make well informed, realistic plans for the future and to be able to execute these as a changing world' (Gilworth, 2017).

The research captured the career readiness of 308,000 unique students cross-sectionally (one response to the survey during any of the three years of the project), and 118,378 students longitudinally (responding to the survey year on year). To develop a connected picture of students' career thinking and experience in their own personal context, Careers Registration data was linked with other types of student data. These data included student characteristics, DLHE data, graduation surveys, careers service engagement data, and the EHC at one institution. Careers Registration contains its own entry measure as students complete registration questionnaires at the start of their university journey. This allowed the measurement of change in careers thinking from entry to the start of the final year for undergraduate students (career thinking movement). Response ratios (proportions of student selecting statements from each of the categories year on year) and *Compete* category growth (increase in respondents selecting statements within the *Compete* category) were analysed.

Multinomial modelling of careers readiness statement selection (n=89,000 for academic year 2016/17) enabled understanding of the relationship between career thinking (the nominal dependent variable) and a variety of socio-demographic characteristics (independent variables) (Field, 2009). The model held *Decide* phase career thinking as the baseline, and controlled for the year of study. The initial model included nine variables: POLAR3[1] quintile, age (mature/

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1   The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of the young population that participates in Higher Education. POLAR classifies local areas into five quintiles based on the proportion of 18 year olds who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old. Quintile one shows lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/polar3/

under 21), ethnicity, disability, fee status, gender, subject of study and career thinking phase (*Decide, Plan, Compete, Sorted*). Three project partners also completed multinomial modelling of career readiness and outcomes (DLHE) at an institutional level on data for a full three-year undergraduate student cycle.

Findings

Cross sectional analysis of this large and complex dataset showed that 46% of all students selected statements in the *Decide* category of career readiness when they responded to the questions in 2016/17, and 43% of final year undergraduates were still in the *Decide* phase at the beginning of their final year of study.

Career thinking movement

Analysis of career thinking movement showed more movement between penultimate and final year of full-time undergraduate programmes, whereas smaller changes in career readiness occur between years one and two of full-time undergraduate programmes. Of students responding in years one and two of their programme, 59% had no change in their career readiness. Of those that changed their career readiness, 23% selected a higher ranked statement and 18% selected a lower ranked statement. Of those students responding in years two and three of study, 61% selected the same career readiness statement. Here we see a marginally higher percentage (26%) of students selecting a higher ranked statement and 13% selecting a lower ranked statement.

Compete category career thinking

There was an observed increase of 18.28% in *Compete* category responses between years one and three of study (1.52% students in *Compete* phase in year one, compared to 19.8% *Compete* phase in year three of study. When broken down by mode of study and fee status, findings revealed higher growth in *Compete* career readiness for students with overseas fee status and undertaking full time study. Only small differences were observed between students with widening participation (WP) characteristics and the rest of the cohort.
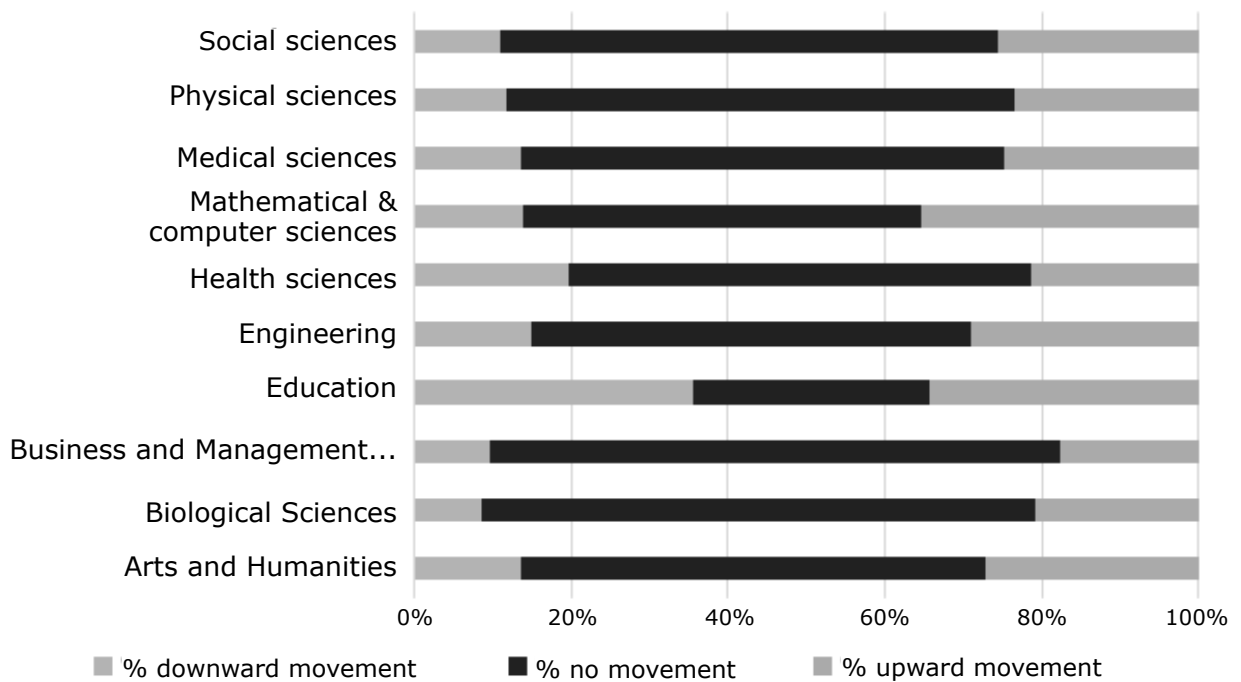
Chart 1: Y2 to Y3 tracking career thinking movement by subject of study

There were some large observed differences between subject areas. Overall non-science subjects had higher *Compete* category growth. Biological sciences had the smallest observed 'downward' shift of all subject areas (8%). Education is the only subject that showed an increased 'downward' movement in career readiness. This could be due to the wide variety of programmes included under Education subject codes, and this would benefit from further analysis at a more granular level.

Factors affecting career thinking

Four variables were significantly associated with career thinking at the 98% confidence level: POLAR3, age, ethnicity and fee status. Students from POLAR3 quintiles one and two (lowest participation neighbourhoods) were more likely to be in the *Decide* phase than *Compete* phase of career readiness at each year of study – though the effect size decreases with increasing years of study. Black and ethnic minority students were more likely to be in *Decide* phase of career readiness than white students. Young students were more likely to be in the *Decide* phase of career readiness than mature students. Home/EU students were more likely to be in the *Decide* phase than overseas students.

Career readiness and graduate outcomes

Institutional level modelling at three partner institutions found a significant correlation between career readiness and graduate outcomes. Final year students who are further along in their career planning (i.e. in the *Compete* phase) are somewhat more likely to be in employment after graduation and significantly more likely to be in a graduate role. A change in career readiness between the penultimate and final year of study has less impact on outcomes than the phase of career readiness reported at the start of the final year. The overall probability of finding any type of employment increases with the career readiness stages, and is slightly higher for undergraduates compared to postgraduates.

Analysis showed final year students who have no work experience are considerably less likely to be in employment after graduation and statistically less likely to be in a graduate role. Students who do a placement year as part of their undergraduate studies have an increased probability of finding graduate level employment. Female graduates were half as likely to be earning a higher salary (£30,000 or above) than their

male peers. Female graduates were also significantly more likely to be in the earlier phases of career readiness than their male peers.

How is Careers Registration data being used to develop professional practice?

Data is no longer a by-product of the day-to-day business of HE providers, it is a 'critical value layer' for driving strategic decision-making at an institutional, regional and sector level (Long & Siemens, 2011, p. 34). HE careers and employability services are drawing value and meaning to Careers Registration data by analysing and presenting this data for the purposes of 'holistic decision-making' (Long & Siemens, 2011, p. 36) through strategic and operational engagement with academic departments and senior managers. This includes drawing up partnership agreements; sharing subject specific data packs with academics to provide key employability information focusing on career readiness; informing institutional policy and decision making; and persuading employers of student interest in their sectors. Careers and employability services have also used the data to promote relevant events and provide support to students from at risk groups including students from WP backgrounds, and those with no work experience, or career plan, as identified as key to graduate success (Shury et al, 2017).

Careers Registration data is included in institutional key performance indicators and metrics. Access to quick, timely, accurate and connected data allows careers and employability services to engage responsively with their stakeholders (students, academics, employers, senior managers). Careers Registration has the potential to be a component of a standardised measure of learning gain in relation to student employability and is in widespread use as a local measure in the institutional context.

The ability of careers and employability services to visualise, contextualise and communicate the data with staff and students in a timely manner is key to supporting decision making in real time, and gives value to the data (Daniel, 2017), to help students engage with, and develop their own career readiness.

Limitations

Careers Registration is a self-reporting tool and is therefore potentially subject to self-reporting bias (Bryman, 2016). In particular, students near the start of their studies may have more limited or unrealistic awareness of their future options, preferences and their own capabilities. This may lead them to over-report their state of career readiness. For example, students on biomedical sciences programmes may start their studies with the expectation that this will lead to them studying medicine in the future and so report themselves as having a career plan in mind. As they progress in their studies, they may gain a better understanding of how likely this really is or may become aware of other options available to them. This may cause them to select lower ranked statements on subsequent surveys. They will appear to go 'downwards' on the scale but their career thinking has become more realistic. The methodology uses a compact data collection tool, which is simple to implement within the student registration process. Whilst this means we capture data on the majority of the student populations, improving the reliability of our findings, we are limited on the level of detail we can collect. The development of a standardisation framework (fig 2) to account for institutional differences in methodology, notably the wording of questions and response options, makes it possible to analyse Careers Registration data at a sector level. This could allow for regional, mission group and subject level benchmarking on a national scale.

Conclusions

There is no going back for careers and employability services in terms of big data and analytics. Careers Registration data provides unprecedented insight into what students are doing to plan their career, and the experiences they are gaining to support their employability. The research findings support and build upon the findings of previous research into graduate outcomes (Shury et al, 2017). The findings demonstrate that being further along in your career thinking, and undertaking employability enhancing experience such as internships or holding a position in a student club or society are associated with graduate level outcomes. The knowledge that just under half

of all students are still in the *Decide* phase of career thinking at the start of their final year of study enables HE providers to plan timely interventions and streamline resource allocation to support students at pivotal points in their student journey. This can help students to progress their career planning, gain helpful experience and review their own progress.

Access to this data is both an opportunity and a challenge. Careers and employability services are not traditionally set up to deal with this kind of large-scale data, and there is a need to build greater data capacity within services. Improvements to data capacity could include more intuitive CSMS and dashboards. Subsequently there is a need to develop staff data capabilities and confidence. Manipulating, visualising and explaining Careers Registration data are central to ensuring that the value of such large-scale data sets to careers and employability services are shared with students and staff to enable targeted resourcing and support to help learners develop their employability and plan their future.

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Career decision making in a rural school

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This research focuses on the complexity of career decision making in rural school-leavers. Whilst there has been research conducted on graduate career choice and identity in island communities in Scotland, there is little research on rural school-leaver career choices in mainland Scotland. This qualitative project aimed to contribute to the knowledge base in relation to career decision making in rural school-leavers. Participants were interviewed about their post-school plans and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Themes of 'proximity', 'perceptions of home location', 'support network' and 'personal agency' were found to influence the career decisions of the pupils. It was found that whilst home location influenced the pupils' decisions, this combined with personal agency and socio-economic factors.

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Introduction

Dumfries and Galloway is the third largest local authority by land mass in Scotland. Key industries in Dumfries and Galloway include forestry and farming (SDS, 2017), occupations that are often located in the most remote parts of the region out with public transport links. Public transport in remote, rural areas can be limited and expensive, and within Dumfries and Galloway 22% of households do not have access to private transport (Health Intelligence Unit, 2015). Therefore, many school-leavers of secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway face geographical challenges in accessing further and higher education, jobs and training. The low frequency of public transport means that school-leavers relying on it may face protracted commutes due to waiting times or find they cannot access an opportunity due to time-tabling logistics. For others, the opportunities to pursue their chosen career may not be possible within the region and

therefore requires a substantial commute or in some cases moving away from the area. This adds a different dimension to the career decision making process or requires an alignment to available local opportunities. Therefore, this project looks to explore the influences in the career decisions of school-leavers in a rural area.

Career decisions in rural areas

There is growing body of international research on career decision making in rural communities. Corbett's (1997) study of schooling in a coastal community in Nova Scotia highlights the complexity of 'success' in a rural community. Corbett (1997) discusses Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which describes the connections between individuals such as between families and communities and how those connections are used (Fields, 2017). Whilst some individuals develop academic connections through school and move away, the strong community and traditions associated with fishing, means that many pupils stay to join the family fishing business. Corbett (1997) explains how these choices compete, and that it can be based on these forms of capital that the individual makes their choices. More recently, Bårdsdatter Bakke (2018) describes the themes of 'context' and 'competence' in the career decision making of pupils in rural Norway in relation to their choice to 'stay or go'. Bårdsdatter Bakke (2018) highlights that the complexity of the career decisions faced by pupils links with the strong sense of community in the area.

Alexander (2013, 2015a, 2015b) focuses on graduate identity in rural island communities. Alexander (2013) highlights that in rural island communities, compromise accompanied by a degree of luck is a key to career success; that career planning can be challenging due to limited opportunities; and the 'hidden jobs' market is where many opportunities

exist. That is, to gain employment the graduate needs to build connections and identify with the sense of community. This compromise could include an initial move to the mainland first or taking a different role. Alexander (2016) focuses on the impact of socio-cultural factors on the career decision-making process of higher education students from Orkney and Shetland. Her findings demonstrate that proximity was an important factor and whilst 'island habitus' was important in the decision-making process and could provide structure it did not '*determine individual choice*' (Alexander, 2016, p188). Alexander (2018) argues that despite globalisation and new technologies there is not an even spread of opportunities; there are areas of poverty and national and local variations in the number and types of career opportunities available. Recent commentary suggests that the geographic mobility of graduates is over-estimated (Ball, 2017). Ball's (2017) analysis of data demonstrates a trend that it is the minority of university students who move away from their home region to study and later move again to work. Alexander (2018) discusses the issue of 'spatial justice' arguing that increased mobility is not the answer to reducing 'spatial injustice'. This perspective details the complex interaction of geographical and social space and the way they are constructed. This combines to influence the lived experiences of the individuals who inhabit them.

Whilst one of the decisions for those living in rural areas may be to 'stay' or 'go' this does not exclude other influences. The influence of family, socio-economic background, aspirations and education in young people is well researched (Flouri & Panourgia, 2012; Elsley 2014; Oomen, 2018). A report by the New South Wales Government (2014) in Australia comments on the importance of parental relationships in terms of career development in their children through raising aspirations. Elsley's (2014) report on young people's views of poverty and education in Scotland documents that education and home are perceived as the top factors determining success in life. Shucksmith's (2004) literature review on social exclusion of young people in rural areas discusses the vicious circle that young people from a working-class background can find themselves: that a car is needed to access a job, but a job is needed to pay for a car. This research aligns with traditional structural theory. Ken Roberts' (1968) early theory asserts that an

individual's ambitions and career are largely determined by the interplay of 'opportunity structures' such as education, local labour market, class and gender. More recently, Roberts (2009) discusses how opportunities structures have changed; such as the structure of employment, with most jobs now being non-manual. Roberts (1997) argues that whilst individuals can make choices with regards to their career these choices do not provide the whole picture and still operate within a structure. In contrast, social cognitive career theory (Lent & Brown; 1996; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Hackett, 1987) gives a more prominent role to personal agency. Lent et al. (1994) assert that an individual's 'self efficacy' interacts with 'outcome expectations' and 'goals' and it is this that determines whether a behaviour is initiated or not.

The existing body of research highlights the complexity of career decision making, however there is limited research on Scottish rural school leavers' career decisions and the influences on these decisions. Therefore, the primary question for the study was: What factors contribute to career decisions in pupils from a rural school and how do they influence those career decisions?

Method

To answer the primary question a data-rich narrative was required. The project took a qualitative approach, which allowed for an exploration of motivations. Six upcoming school leavers were interviewed on their post-school plans and how they had made these decisions in the context of their rural location. Four participants had an intended destination of college and two of university. Four participants were female and two were male and all participants were between 16 and 18 years of age. No participant was looking to go straight into employment. The small sample size means generalisations cannot be made.

Information on parental/guardian occupation was gathered and classified using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Occupational Grouping Hierarchy using their online occupational coding tool (ONS, 2018). Where both parents worked, the highest occupational category was used. The hierarchy runs from major group one: managers, directors and senior officials to nine: elementary occupations.

Thematic analysis was the chosen approach for data analysis. The interviews were transcribed, and then relevant extracts were coded. Data was coded according to intra and inter-interview prevalence (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke & Rance, 2014). Thematic analysis demonstrated four key themes of 'proximity', 'perceptions of home location', 'support network' and 'personal agency'. These combined to explain the influences in the subject area, destination type and destination location the pupil chose. The participant quotes have been anonymised and the local dialect has been preserved.

Themes explained

When assessing the components to career choice required by the pupil there were three main elements to this decision. These are described in Table 1 to provide clarity of terminology in discussion.

Table 1: Career choice components

Component to Decision	Illustrative Example
Industry or subject area (What)	Work with animals, MA (Hons) Geography
Destination Type (How)	University, College, Modern Apprenticeship (M.A.)
Destination Location (Where)	Home location, Glasgow, London

Proximity

Proximity was an influence when considering the destination type and the destination location. That is, a decision was made as to whether to pursue an opportunity based on its distance from home. Of the four pupils going to college, two spoke of this being a second-choice option. The first pupil spoke of the available apprenticeship opportunities in their chosen area being too far from home;

> 'Like I say if it was Manchester or somewhere, I could come back and see my family but coming back from Portsmouth…well…it's not really ideal to be honest…'

The second pupil discussed a strong desire to move away from the area but viewed this as 'unrealistic' or a longer-term plan.

> 'No straight away no. I think I need to be realistic about it. I'd say maybe three years…'

No pupil had disregarded university due to proximity. Only the two pupils going to university had a definite plan to leave home. This was partly due to the limited availability of degree level programs within the region and partly as the two pupils going to university viewed moving away as the 'status quo'. Both pupils perceived distance to family as being the main factor in the choice of university as this provided them with the ability to return home easily.

> 'I just I didnae [didn't] fancy it. I didnae fancy going any further. I didnae look into the uni's further... I didn't even give Dundee or anything like that a second thought…'

In both cases, destination type was the initial decision, followed by subject choice, then, location of destination type then finally university availability within this prescribed area.

Perceptions of the area

There were mixed perceptions of the area. Whilst the positive and negative perceptions of the area acted as an influence in the pupils' long-term career plans, it was the perception of opportunities locally that pupils spoke of as having the biggest influence on their initial plans.

The pupils who spoke most positively about the area were the two going to university with plans to move away. The four pupils who were not planning to leave had mixed views on the area; they acknowledged the sense of community but found the available opportunities limiting. Two of these pupils had considered moving away longer-term, whilst two had not considered moving.

Four of the pupils talked of the support and inclusion that being part of this community provided. They viewed this as unique to rural areas.

> 'I love living in [this village]…if something happens everyone pulls together everyone supports one another and…if it's anywhere bigger it's going to be different…it's just because everyone kens [knows] one another asking for one another everyone cares…'

The two pupils moving away (for university) spoke of a desire to return to the area but there was a split in whether they viewed this as a realistic goal or not:

> 'I definitely will no be [here]. I doubt it. Whether I'll still be in [this city] I don't know…there isn't many labs that's to do with forensics or the police…It's London and that I may be there. I just don't know where I'm going to end up.'

> 'Maybe I'll end up taking to the city and stay in the city but I'm pretty sure I'll end up coming back up this way…'

Two of the pupils, planning on going to college, described boredom and a desire to move away.

> 'Not really much to do really, anything to keep me if I'm honest. There's not much work…'

Factory-work dominated pupils' view of potential employment in the area. This was partly because it is one of the largest employers in the immediate area, providing both permanent and seasonal work, but also because of its accessibility by walking or public transport. Whilst pupils spoke positively of the strong community links, in contrast, gaining employment at the factory was described in a negative context. For all six pupils it acted as catalyst to continue beyond statutory education to build qualification levels.

> 'Because the only thing here are factories and I decided quite early on that I didn't want to be stuck in a factory for ever. I don't think I could get a good job there.'

Support network

All pupils spoke of discussing their career ideas with parents/guardians and extended family, friends and teachers. There was only one case of these discussions not being positive and supportive. Immediate family was a big influence in career decision. This influence was largely in a supportive capacity and acted to affirm the pupils' choices.

> 'I think they are quite happy with my decisions because I'm showing that I want to do something, that I don't really want to be stuck doing nothing'

One pupil spoke of the necessity of learning to drive as they were accessing a college out with the region, which had no direct route with public transport;

> 'I'll have to save up and buy a car because obviously without driving its pretty basically impossible to get to [the college]…even though it's not that far.'

A dichotomy existed between the pupils that were planning to learn to drive and would have access to private transport and those that would be reliant on public transport. The three pupils from families in higher-occupational groupings had a definite plan to drive. The three pupils from lower-occupational background had no plans to learn to drive. Whilst the financial implication of learning to drive was not directly discussed, this implies the existence of a financial barrier for pupils from a lower-occupational background.

Personal agency

Personal agency as described by Lent et al. (1996) was the biggest influence on the subject area, destination type and level the pupil chose to study at. Four of the pupils cited their preferences as taking precedence over other influencing factors.

> 'Most of my career decisions have been my own choice. It's just through seeing things in everyday life.'

One pupil described growing self-efficacy as exam results provided evidence of their ability:

> 'I took physics…then I dropped it and thought I can't do this I'm not good enough…and I really wish I'd stuck at it, persevered because I felt the same about everything – I'm no good at this I'm no clever enough and I ended up doing really well…'

All six pupils spoke of childhood aspiration and/or enjoyment of the subject area as the main factor behind their choice of career and aligning these aspirations with careers they viewed as available.

> 'I've always had an eye for engineering…When I was younger I would always play about with things…build things…fix things…so I kinda knew I always wanted to do engineering…'

Discussion

This research provides evidence for the impact of the pupils' location combining with personal agency in the shaping of their career decisions. Throughout the interviews there was clear evidence of geographical structures influencing the career decision making process. Alexander (2016) highlights the importance of proximity to some island graduates and this project has found this to be a key determinant for the two pupils accessing university education. Whilst those pupils were moving out with the region, their choice to pick universities close to home links with wider graduate trends (Ball, 2017).

This concept of proximity extended to the pupil who had chosen not to pursue an apprenticeship as the location of these opportunities would have meant a move away from home. This ties in with Alexander's (2018) discussion on the imbalance in the geographic spread of opportunities. Furthermore, Shucksmith (2004) discusses that local rural labour markets often offer fewer rewarding opportunities than national labour markets. The pupil spoke of the difficulties of returning to family if they moved away. This lends support to Roberts (2009) that even in the 21st century structural factors have a continuing relevance in career decision and that not all opportunities are available to all.

In addition, Shucksmith (2004) discusses how access to private transport can play a key role in the access of opportunities. This ties in with the concept of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Fields, 2017). This divide in accessibility to opportunities has several dimensions. It could be viewed as a rural issue affecting all pupils living rurally compared to pupils in an urban area with better public transport links. The three pupils from lower occupational backgrounds had no plans to learn to drive, so this divide narrows to those who have the resources to learn to drive and those who do not. Then finally, there is a divide in accessible opportunities for those leaving school at their statutory leaving date in rural schools, who are unable to drive until they reach their seventeenth birthday. The three pupils learning to drive were from higher-occupational backgrounds and two had plans to move away from the area. Therefore, this suggests that the three pupils from lower-occupational backgrounds are

doubly deprived as they are the ones who most need to learn to drive to access opportunities but are less likely to have the resources to do it.

Four pupils viewed their agency as the primary influence in their career decisions whilst acknowledging the influence of area in which they lived. Alexander (2016) finds that students have agency, but this is not independent of their environment. Pupils' aversion to working in the local factory examples how a pupil's environment interacts with their personal agency. In this case the pupils spoke of making an active choice to continue with their education; however, this was influenced in part by the limited number of opportunities in the local area, epitomised by the factory.

All pupils spoke of choosing their subject/industry area based on childhood ambitions. Three of the pupils spoke of needing to align these childhood ambitions with career paths they viewed as available to them in terms of their perceived abilities and/or available opportunities. Once again, it evidences the link between personal agency, that is pursuing their chosen industry area, with environmental and socio-cultural factors. For two pupils this meant altering the destination type and for one pupil this meant choosing a course in a related area. Alexander (2013) talks about the role of compromise for graduates accessing opportunities in island communities and this aspect of compromise is evident in these pupils' decisions. This demonstrates that personal agency does not provide a full explanation of the pupils' career decision, however, this determination to pursue a long-held ambition suggests that for these pupils their ambitions are strongly held and not easily disregarded.

Conclusion

This was a small-scale study, scratching the surface of the complexity of career decisions facing rural pupils. There was an interaction between the personal agency a pupil had and the geographical and social structures that the pupil operated within. Some of the influences will be unique to this area whilst others have been echoed in other studies. Although pupils spoke about the different influences and challenges surrounding their career decisions, the pupils ultimately viewed themselves as active agents in their careers.

Further research on rural school leavers would continue to build this growing knowledge base. A limitation of this study is that the only destinations pupils were seeking were further and higher education. A future study that analysed the decisions of pupils considering a wider range of destinations and industry areas would provide a fuller picture of the varying influences on career decision. A longitudinal study would provide information on how plans made when leaving school match with a pupil's actual career path. This would give a detailed narrative on the realities of a career, and whether, the influences evolve and change in salience at different points in a pupil's career. In addition, replication of the study in urban and other rural areas would provide a comparative study and tease out which influences are unique to a rural context. Replication would also provide a broader knowledge base on the differences between pupils' mobility; specifically, the differences between those who can move but do not want to, and those who stay, but want to move.

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As a first attempt at a formal research project I have found the project both challenging and rewarding. It has been a steep learning curve but I'm looking forward to the next one with the benefit of this experience!

'Um, err, ahh…' Careers practitioners' perceptions of weight: A thematic analysis

Corinne Holden, Christian van Nieuwerburgh & Julia Yates

With 61% of the UK population being overweight, it is likely that career professionals will encounter overweight clients. Even though being overweight is thought to be potentially detrimental to career development, there is little theory or advice to help career practitioners have productive conversations about the issue. This paper reports the findings of a small-scale qualitative study exploring the experiences of six career coaches discussing issues of weight with clients. Results show participants felt deeply uncomfortable with the topic, and were ambivalent about the appropriateness of discussing it within career conversations, despite acknowledging that being overweight can impact negatively on employment.

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Introduction

Global obesity rates are rising and 61% of the adult population are now overweight or obese (defined as having a body mass index (BMI) >25). Furthermore, obesity in the UK population is considerably above the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average (OECD, 2019). People who are overweight or obese are the subject of discrimination in our society. Obesity is perceived as a character flaw (Finkelstein et al, 2007) with the overweight seen as unattractive, emotionally impaired, introverted and incompetent. They promote feelings of disgust (Levine & Schweitzer, 2013) and are considered worthy of blame because of the perceived self-inflicted nature of the condition.

Being overweight or obese has a detrimental effect at every stage of the employment process. The negative stereotype of being overweight occurs throughout the working world (Roehling, Roehling & Odland, 2008), and is set to continue as millennials (those born between 1981 and 1994) have been shown to hold stereotypical and discriminatory views of overweight people when it comes to employment (Ilan, Edgar, & O'Kane, 2016). People who are overweight are more likely to be the subject of teasing, perpetuating a cycle leading to further bias and stereotype reinforcement (Teachman, Gapinski, Brownell, Rawlins & Jeyaram, 2003). Indeed, reinforcement of stereotypes can also be exacerbated through company health promotion initiatives (Tauber, Mulder & Flint, 2018). Weight discrimination is prevalent throughout the employment cycle from hiring onwards (Agerstom & Rooth, 2011), with the overweight being given, for example, lower ratings at job interviews (Finkelstein, Frautschy, Demuth & Sweeney, 2007) and having reduced earnings potential (Judge & Cable, 2011).

Responding to the growing challenges faced by people who are obese and overweight in society, the European Court of Justice (2014) ruled that obesity could be treated as a disability. Yet although parallels can be drawn between weight and other characteristics which lead to discrimination, weight is a complicated issue and not directly comparable with disability, race or gender. One key difference is that weight is deemed controllable and changeable over time (Rooth, 2009). Another is the evidence that weight has a real impact for employers and employment costs (Judge & Cable, 2011). Evidence shows that overweight people are prone to absenteeism (White et al., 2015), with the link between raised BMI correlating progressively with a reduction in work ability (Andersen, Izquierdo & Sundstrup, 2017) and productivity (Morris, 2007). This could be because of the link between obesity and health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, stroke and raised blood pressure (Morris, 2007). There

is also evidence for a link between weight and mental health conditions (Rao, 2010), though this has been disputed (da Luz et al., 2017). The rate of absence is higher for women than men (Melsom & Mastekaasa, 2017), with an overall cost to the UK economy of £21 billion in 2011 (Gallup, 2018).

Weight is clearly a complex issue. Those who are overweight or obese face discrimination both within society and within the workplace, yet there is no legislation in the UK to prevent unfair discrimination (Flint et al., 2016) and the arguments to be made to employers who are choosing, consciously or not, to reject overweight and obese job applicants are complicated.

The nuances and complexities of this topic have the potential to place career practitioners in challenging situations. Weight has an impact on career development and employment opportunities, and as such could arguably constitute a legitimate topic for discussion in career interventions. Given the complexity of the topic and the sensitive nature of these conversations, practitioners must feel confident in their boundaries and skilled at using the right strategies, to ensure that the conversations are appropriate and valuable for their clients. Yet despite the apparent significance of the topic, limited research has been conducted on the topic and few guidelines are available to help practitioners to navigate this sensitive but important subject.

This study takes its starting point from the work of Yates, Hooley and Bagri (2017) and Yates and Hooley (2018) on 'career image' who in their research explored career practitioners' views about various aspects of appearance and identified that their participants found the issue of weight a particularly difficult one to deal with. Whilst their participants acknowledged that weight can have an influence on career paths and employment success, they were not all confident that the topic was an appropriate one to raise with clients and lamented the lack of guidelines for practice to underpin their conversations. The authors called for further exploration of this topic, and in this paper we present the findings of a qualitative study which specifically explores the experiences and views of career practitioners on discussions about weight with clients.

Method

This study explored the views of six career coaches (four women and two men) who work for a large outplacement company based in the City of London. All names have been anonymised. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews based at the career coaches' workplace. The study aimed to gather rich, in depth data about the practitioners' experiences, beliefs and opinions, and as such it was thought that a qualitative methodology would be most suitable. One to one interviews were considered the most appropriate method of data collection as it was felt that participants might be more comfortable discussing this potentially sensitive topic individually.

Once ethical approval was obtained, an email was sent to all career coaches in the organisation inviting them to take part in the study and six agreed to get involved. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and the data were analysed using a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is a systematic and rigorous approach to data analysis which allows for the identification, analysis and description of themes, trends, relationships and phenomena by the examination of detailed meanings and concepts within the data. With the analysis an inductive, bottom up approach was taken whereby phenomena were observed, recorded and analysed through to abstract concept, with coding closely joined to the collected data.

Interviews were transcribed and re-read multiple times to facilitate familiarity with the data (Willig, 2013). Coding of themes was conducted in a structured and succinct fashion that was pertinent to the research topic, followed by further organisation and collation into the identified themes. Throughout this process the data was constantly revisited to ensure accuracy and each theme analysed to ensure range, focus and narrative consistency in a back and forward process (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and an attitude of healthy scepticism adopted. Close supervision, researcher reflexivity and a commitment to staying close to the data ensured methodological rigour.

Findings and discussion

Three themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) how you look has an impact on your career, (2) it is

uncomfortable to talk about your client's weight and (3) it is better to focus on the factors clients can influence. These findings will now be described, illustrated by quotations from the participants, and discussed in the light of the existing literature. Pseudonyms have been used to preserve participant anonymity.

Theme 1 – how you look has an impact on your career

The career coaches in this study recognised that looks are significant when it comes to work, summed up by Isla's comment that 'Unfortunately, people are very much judged on first impressions of what they look like'. Participants were aware of the stigma of being overweight and believed that this affects the attitudes of employers. Practitioners believed that better looking employees are more likely to be rewarded in the workplace, as Isla explained 'More attractive people are going to be successful.' Although the participants acknowledged this reality (Little & Roberts, 2012), they found it unpalatable and wished that the world were different:

> 'Much as we would all like to pretend that we are not in any way affected by it, I genuinely believe that yes, it [appearance] does have an impact on people's career prospects' (Harry).

Prejudice by employers against workers who are overweight has been well documented in the literature (Bartels & Nordstrom, 2013; Roehling, Roehling & Elluru, 2018). The participants in this study all acknowledged the existence of the phenomenon and linked this prejudice mainly to the hiring process suggesting that the interview was a critical moment when first impressions counted. They reported a belief that being overweight leads to employer assumptions: 'if people don't take reasonable care of themselves they wouldn't be as committed to looking after their career' (Harry) or 'they are more likely to be ill' (Isla) and the participants felt that even those employers who would not consciously discriminate could suffer from unconscious bias, particularly, as Emily noted, 'in the selection process'. These views are supported by the empirical research which suggests that those who are overweight are subject to unconscious prejudice within the workplace (Chamberlain, 2016).

Theme 2 - it is uncomfortable to talk about a client's weight

Practitioners felt the topic of weight was difficult to discuss with their clients. Tom explained that even the language itself made him feel uncomfortable: 'Personally, I feel guilty just saying the word "fat" or "overweight" or "obese"' and Harry illustrated the degree of the taboo associated with weight, suggesting that even 'sexuality is an easier topic to discuss now than weight'. The participants' responses to talking about weight with their clients were visceral in some cases: 'even thinking about it makes me feel uncomfortable' (Harry), but the participants regretted not being able to talk about it as openly as they would like, describing it as 'taboo' (Emily). This difficulty was expressed with many pauses, stutters and attempts at using appropriate and correct terminology when discussing the topic within the research interviews.

Some participants felt that there were circumstances in which they could see themselves discussing weight with clients but felt that the topic would have to be initiated by the client: they felt that only this would assure them that the clients would react positively to the topic. Yet it is interesting to note that two of the participants who felt that they would in theory discuss weight with their clients, had not broached the topic to date.

Four participants felt that weight was 'inappropriate' for a careers discussion as it was outside their remit or expertise and there were concerns raised about whether these discussions would be able to have a positive impact on their clients, particularly given time constraints. Coaches feared the conversation may 'unleash things' (Isla) that they were ill-equipped to deal with, such as mental health issues. The practitioners' concerns are not without foundation, as clear links have been established between obesity and mental ill health (Simon et al., 2006) This adds to the weight of evidence that practitioners need further guidelines on how to handle these issues in their practice.

Career coaches work hard to be reflective (Schön, 1983) and, with training, this is key to the identification of their own individual preconceptions. A core value of many career coaches is unconditional positive

regard for their clients (Yates, 2014) and this may have made it particularly hard for the participants in this study to appear judgemental. The participants in this study did not want to make assumptions about clients' desire to lose weight but some assumptions could be discerned in their interviews, with participants commenting that overweight clients came with 'baggage' (Tom) or emotional issues. This could indicate the importance of training for career practitioners to help them first to identify their own assumptions and prejudices, and then to support their clients as they deal with the assumptions and prejudices of others.

The practitioner's own body relationship influences how they feel about discussing weight with their clients (Brown & Thompson, 2007). This notion was introduced by practitioners with comments such as 'As you can see, I'm not so slim myself!' (Olivia) or 'The client may think "Oh well, it's alright for you!" I mean I am not super-thin but I don't have issues with my weight!' (Emily). Although polar opposites, both Olivia and Emily felt unease because of their own body shape and how clients may react to it and again this suggests that practitioners need further guidance in the most effective ways to broach the subject with clients.

Practitioners reported feeling anxious that talking about weight may cause offence, with politeness and etiquette making the discussion difficult. The working alliance with the client is imperative for the success of a coaching intervention (Masdonati, Massoudi & Rossier, 2009), and coaches feared that a discussion of weight might risk damaging rapport, client self-esteem or confidence, which would render the coaching ineffective and leave the individual less equipped for employment. It was perceived that the overweight individual would already have awareness of their weight and to talk about it could be deeply insensitive. This echoes the findings in Yates et al. (2017), and indicates that there is a need for further research to identify whether these fears are justified.

Theme 3 - it is better to focus on factors that clients can influence

To some degree, people are in control of their own weight, but it is not always an easy thing to change, and the participants were conscious that advising their clients to lose weight may have limited impact:

'If someone is on a 3-month programme…how are they going to change their weight over that period of time?' (Isla). But whilst the career coaches found the topic of weight difficult to raise and were unsure whether it fell within their remit of legitimate career coaching, the participants were eager to support their clients in other, related ways. Career coaches explained that they felt comfortable discussing other aspects of appearance, including dress for interview (Subhani, Hasan, Azmat & Osman, 2012), body language and how the client should present themselves to 'make the most of what they have got' (Olivia). Coaches were also quite willing to discuss lifestyle, well-being and fitness as a gentle, indirect way to induce the client to think about image. The coaches felt that these conversations in themselves could be difficult but indicated that their empathy for their clients enabled them to maintain a strong client relationship. Group sessions were suggested as an alternative strategy through which information could be passed on without singling out individuals and by working on constructs such as personal branding, participants found that some clients gain self-awareness in a less direct way. These strategies were strikingly similar to those identified by the participants in Yates and Hooley's study (2018).

Limitations and directions for future research

There are a number of limitations associated with this study which should be kept in mind. As a qualitative study, the study does not aim to be generalisable, but with a small sample size, we should exercise caution in how we interpret the findings. The participants volunteered to get involved in the study which could suggest that they had a particular interest in this topic and therefore might mark them out as different from a typical career coach. The participants were all working with adult clients many of whom were working within the City of London. As such their client group and the employers their clients might be seeking to work with could be considered atypical.

There is no literature for careers practitioners with regard to managing a discussion on weight, nor is there any theory to back up practice, meaning that there is very little to support careers practitioners

who wish to engage in this topic collaboratively with their clients. This study offers further support to the calls in Yates et al. (2017, 2018) for further guidance for practitioners as they navigate these tricky waters. Further research could usefully focus on exploring and evaluating the approaches that career practitioners use when discussing weight with clients, and could examine the topic from the perspective of the clients, identifying the kind of approaches and advice that they themselves would find useful.

Conclusion

This study has explored the attitudes of careers professionals to their overweight clients. The topic clearly made the career coaches in this study feel uncomfortable. From a professional perspective, they were unclear of where their boundaries should lie, and there was no consensus on whether the topic is an appropriate one for career conversations, nor a common understanding of the techniques which might allow for effective and supportive discussions with clients. On a personal level, the participants themselves shared the prevalent societal views that weight is a taboo topic and one which made them feel personally embarrassed.

The practitioners in this study echoed the views of those surveyed in Yates and Hooley (2017) that they struggle with the tension between wanting to support their clients yet not quite knowing how best to address the topic. There is widespread acknowledgement both from this study and in previous literature that appearance has an impact on career development and employability, yet there are no guidelines to help practitioners understand where the boundaries should lie, and no guidance to support the facilitation of these discussions. As with the participants in Yates and Hooley's study, these career coaches are clearly strongly motivated to help their clients and have developed their own individual strategies for deciding where to draw the line, and how to ensure that the conversations are effective and positive.

Here, practitioners in conversations with overweight clients find a paradox. They believe their clients are uninformed about the issue of weight discrimination but, as professionals, are unable to address this

because of societal constraints and fear of causing offence. Despite being empathetic to their clients and their clear ethical imperative to support the clients in their career endeavours, the participants in this study found the subject of weight too difficult to discuss at individual level and lack any strategies for doing so. The participants also reported the desire for a change in society where being overweight is more acceptable, with one participant calling for a kinder terminology to be adopted, which has been echoed in a recent article calling for a new narrative for those living with obesity (Ralston et al., 2018). By highlighting this issue, it is hoped to increase awareness of this phenomenon and encourage debate. Ethical guidelines, theories and training would help in working towards lifting the taboo on weight in employment, facilitating practitioners to engage with the topic for the ultimate benefit of their clients and of society at large.

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Who is supporting the career development of refugees? The role of grassroots organisations

Gill Frigerio & Rabia Nasimi

This article uses a case study approach to explore issues in career development provision for resettled refugees in the UK, with particularly reference to the role of grassroots organisations in meeting such needs. Using the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association as a case study, we shed light on the way voluntary organisations support their users in accessing employment, as well as other components of career development. Possible ways for such organisations to complement the work of public employment services with culturally tailored approaches are considered and issues arising identified.

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Introduction

Issues of global migration are never far from our news screens. In the UK in recent months this has focused in particular on appropriate immigration policy for after a planned exit from the European Union and the continuing needs of refugees seeking asylum here. Beneath the headlines, these politically sensitive topics translate into hundreds of people with refugee backgrounds seeking to integrate into UK society. In the light of this, research, policy and practice has been developing to explore the most effective ways of providing the support needed for integration of resettling refugees. Support to access work and employment is a component of this. In a literature review of the career guidance needs of asylum seeking, refugee and migrant populations, Reid (2017) notes that whilst there is evidence of some local good practice by statutory agencies, this is not well disseminated or researched. Alongside these statutory services, third sector organisations specialising in support for

these communities in multiple ways have sprung up. Some of these are initiated by host communities, whereas others, such as the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA), have been established by community members themselves. We use the term 'grassroots' to refer to such organisations, recognising that they are generated and run by people experiencing first hand the issues addressed.

We begin by identifying a series of issues in career development provision for refugees and go on to introduce the work of one example of a grassroots organisation offering support in this space. Stories of individual users and volunteers are presented to bring to life their experiences. We consider the role such organisations can play in supporting their users in accessing employment, as well as other components of career development, and identify a number of considerations which arise.

Context

Social integration is extremely challenging for refugees and presents specific issues to resolve such as immigration status (including permission to work), language learning and cultural familiarisation, before sustainable employment is achievable. Whilst issues of career choice and development are often viewed as the concern of the privileged and might therefore not be the immediate priority of someone seeking basic safety, we define careers work sufficiently broadly to include supporting individuals to access a stable livelihood, no matter how far away from that they may seem at the outset. After all, employment has been shown to enhance integration and promote personal fulfilment and active citizenship as well as to reduce welfare dependency and enhance educational and health

outcomes on an intergenerational basis (Khoo, 1994).

There are significant challenges for statutory career services in meeting the needs of users with a refugee background. Social isolation and expectations of/ experiences with government agencies in their home country or here in the UK can engender suspicion. Compounding these challenges, government-imposed austerity measures and changes to statutory services in England have weakened statutory career development provision, particularly in England (Watts, 2013). One result of this has been for a more fragmented range of provision to emerge with smaller voluntary organisations and social enterprises springing up to meet specific gaps of groups of users and larger welfare organisations branching out into careers work.

Perhaps a more fundamental challenge to careers work with people of refugee background is the cultural legacy of career development practice. The practice of career counselling has largely been developed in homogenous western capitalist contexts with associated focus on autonomy, normative masculinity, and secularity (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). This differs from the cultural context of the vast majority of conflict zones from which people seek asylum. Traditional matching approaches fail to account for intersecting issues faced by refugees and not least the different labour markets involved.

This article is based on a case study approach, using the ACAA as a 'case' or unit of analysis and drawing on multiple data sources. One author is firmly embedded in the history and development of the organisation and the other is an ally and critical friend. We have drawn on user data from drop-in services and material published elsewhere in evaluation of an externally funded project (Thompson, 2018). This alongside the authors' participant observation enables us to gather individual vignettes of users' stories and verbatim accounts, recorded through the organisation's agreed data handling processes, which are reported using pseudonyms throughout. Thus we integrate unstructured observation and evaluative data into a series of analytical points based on emergent themes.

Challenges of this sort of research include data availability and reliability. Organisations like ACAA have to balance carefully detailed record keeping

through monitored registration forms and bespoke evaluation with maintaining an accessible environment, particularly given likely recent experience of immigration services and a formal environment of compliance.

This is also complex data to gather and manage. Recording nationality may result in someone who has achieved British citizenship through application declaring themselves 'British'. Language skills vary and asking about country of origin and details of migration journey could be intrusive and even retraumatising. When interviewing participants for evaluation there is potential for bias and such interviews usually occurs immediately after users' experiences, showing only their initial reaction and learning. The longitudinal approach needed to surface changed behaviour and results is not available. As such, researching such organisations is not easy or often done, so we present this as a 'revelatory case' (Yin, 2009) bringing into the light this unglamorous and unstructured work and noting its value.

The needs analysis undertaken for the EU funded CminaR project (Reid, 2017) identifies a number of priorities, from increased advocacy and engagement with employers to capacity building for career guidance workers. The project has developed resources to upskill public employment service (PES) workers in issues such as migration complexity, use of language in career coaching and supporting cultural adaptation, handling difficulties appropriately without resorting to a deficit model or retraumatising through intrusion and the use of strategies such as reframing difficulties as evidence of resilience and persistence (Atay, Chant, Conrads, Engelen-Kefer, Ferrari, Hertzberg,…, & Weber, 2018).

As the ACAA has built significant experience of working with this client group, it is our hope that guidance practitioners can also learn from this research and, by surfacing the relevance of their work to employment support, the work of ACAA can be developed still further.

History and Rationale for ACAA

The Nasimi family left Afghanistan in 1999 and were granted asylum in the UK. The experience of settling

into the UK prompted the family to create the ACAA, starting with organising cultural events and day trips for the Afghan community in London. Since then it helps refugees and newcomers from the isolating feelings which can come with migration.

The charity works with Afghans and Central Asians as well as other refugees living away from their homeland, providing the support, skills and knowledge to live and prosper in the UK through the services detailed here. Cultural and social events continue and the organisation also visits individuals and families in detention.

With bases in Hounslow, Lewisham and also Croydon in London, ACAA has also delivered an outstanding project in Afghanistan, setting up the first citizen's advice centres funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). Recently the ACAA won a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service for their work helping refugees settle in the UK.

English language support

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for Integration, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, provides dedicated ESOL class to help migrants integrate into British society. Classes focus on practical English as well as teaching aspects of British culture. The aim is to break down the largest obstacle to integration, employment and success in a new country: the language barrier. The classes are tailored for migrants and address other aspects of integration such as citizenship test, local culture, British politics, and British history, and place a heavy focus on spoken English to enable migrants to thrive. The curriculum includes creating / improving a CV and covering letter and the programme aims that students will engage in further education, volunteering or education and identify that they have become more engaged in their wider communities such as their children's schools.

> Tania, a 26-year-old Albanian, joined the programme in June 2018. Having completed high school and university in Greece, where she was a qualified dental technician, her main priority since moving to the UK a year ago has been to improve her basic English in order to find employment. Through goal setting sessions in class her tutor knew she was keen to write a CV

and gain work experience. She was signposted to a food skills training course, some specific lessons were designed on writing CVs and personal statements, filling in a job application, and interview techniques. Since these classes, Tania has been to three job interviews.

Women's project

Funded by the Pilgrim Trust as 'Women's Workshops for Marginalised Muslim Women', 'Women's Tea Corner' provides women-only workshops to facilitate the empowerment and integration of isolated Muslim women from socially conservative backgrounds who were not reached by other government, charity and council services. The evaluation of the first year of activity reports that 172 women attended across 10 workshops, with 80% of women attending more than once. Of the women 44% were from Afghanistan with 16 other countries of origin disclosed from Asia, Africa and the Middle East and Mediterranean.

> 'My husband doesn't have to take me shopping any more. It's simple stuff. When I want to buy onion or garlic, I know how. I live here and I didn't know basics. I want to go shopping without being scared. I want to go the doctor without anyone else there. Once I wanted to buy spinach. I went into the shop 3 times, I had to go home and get the empty bag. And now I'm learning. I had a GP appointment the other day. It was about female health. I couldn't tell my daughter because I'm embarrassed. I had a translator. I dream of the day I can talk to the doctor without telling someone else. I wasn't sure the translator got it right.' (Zainab)

Ferdowsi supplementary school

The Supplementary School project is ACAA's longest running educational programme, supporting migrant, refugee and underachieving children from predominantly Afghan and disadvantaged backgrounds. Most of the children attending have limited English language skills, have fractured educational histories and struggle in mainstream schools. ACAA aims to assist these students in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science across all key stages. Additionally, ACAA

offers mother-tongue tuition between 12pm and 3pm with some of the students studying Farsi/Pashto for the first two hours before joining the English class for the last hour.

The school determines the level of student's knowledge to create lesson plans tailored to their ability and creates interactive and comprehensive lessons, concentrating on consolidating their existing knowledge and building their confidence and leadership skills. A regular team of volunteer teachers allows students to establish a personal bond with their tutors and ensures parents are updated on their child's progress.

> Mudaser, 9 years old, started at the supplementary school with his sister Hena. He identified his main area of weakness as his spelling skills in general. He joined the school to improve his education across Maths, English and Science.
>
> 'When I started at the supplementary school, I was clever. Now I've become super clever!'
>
> He feels that his spelling has improved and at school he recently scored 10/10 on a spelling test, which he attributes to the work of the supplementary school homework that ensures he practises spelling certain words as well as improves his general spelling ability. His favourite lessons so far have been the science lessons that covered the digestive system.
>
> 'It was very interactive and there were lots of funny parts'. He also enjoyed writing stories in English 'because we get prizes. I got 2nd and 3rd prize for my poems and will hopefully win something for my story'.

A helping hand – mentoring and peer to peer support

The Helping Hand programme provides mentoring and peer-to-peer support for women in difficult life situations. Due to various language and cultural barriers, many refugees experience feelings of isolation, stress, depression and uncertainty upon their arrival in the UK and can struggle to cope without the support

of traditional familial or social networks. Additionally, conservative and religious households may tend to be male-dominated environments, which can engender forced marriage, domestic violence and the normalisation of gender inequality.

The mentoring scheme aims to support isolated women by offering friendly, confidential and tailored advice and guidance. This can in turn reduce isolation and develop support networks amongst potentially isolated or vulnerable refugee women.

> Razia came from Afghanistan to study in the UK. However, she struggled with the language and began to experience the feelings of isolation and loneliness common to many of the refugee women. Despite this, Razia's situation improved when Lewisham Social Services put her in contact with ACAA. The social events, mentoring sessions and workshops that she attended have helped bring about a huge boost in Razia's confidence and communication skills. Razia now helps ACAA with administration, which allows her to further develop her communication, reception and administration skills, thus making her more employable. Her mentor has described how her English speaking and writing skills have vastly improved, to the point where she has been able to make a strong CV to aid her in her goal of securing a job in customer service. She also now works in a local charity store.

Community advice clinic

The Community Advice Clinic, which is now based at the Hounslow shop front centre, provides free legal referrals; equips beneficiaries with the tools to access justice; facilitates opportunity, fair treatment and understanding, all in a confidential and comfortable environment. The clinic is staffed by solicitors from local firms working on a pro-bono basis as well as a range of volunteers. As was the case in Lewisham, the majority of issues being raised concern housing, immigration or family matters.

In the period from opening in December 2017 to August 2018, records show 301 users, with 20 employment related queries logged as the *primary* issue. However, many enquiries cover a variety of

issues and employment might be linked. These more significant interventions are recorded but other queries via telephone or on a more ad hoc nature are not always included in the data. A relatively high proportion of 'British' respondents (70, second only to 84 Afghan) can be attributed to those who have been granted citizenship preferring to report as 'British'.

> Rahim is a 16-year-old Afghan male who moved to the UK with his mother and older brother from Germany. After their arrival in London they soon identified a variety of difficulties they would have to integrate into British society. Language and cultural barriers made life very isolating, and caused problems accessing the job market.
>
> Rahim's mother discovered the ACAA through an advertisement for the organisations drop-in sessions. Rahim's mother used the ACAA as a safe space where she could receive emotional and practical support, including ESOL lessons which she attended regularly. For Rahim's mother the opportunity to speak in her native language and freely express her concerns was a small respite from the isolation she had previously felt.
>
> Rahim was also determined to build himself a life in London. ACAA introduced him to a Farsi speaking mentor who was able to assist him in researching college courses. Rahim is now enrolled onto a full-time construction course and was also assisted in successfully applying for financial assistance from his college.
>
> With his mother's financial difficulties in mind, Rahim sought a part time job. An ACAA volunteer assisted him in creating a CV and gave advice that improved his interview skills and confidence. Remarkably, Rahim was successful in finding a job within a week. Through work and college he has significantly improved his English language skills. He has also applied to begin volunteering for ACAA so that he will be able to support other members of the community, while increasing his working experience.

Volunteering opportunities

Volunteers are central to the work of ACAA, offering the opportunity for personal development through placements in strategic development, legal affairs, teaching, event management and mentoring. Volunteers have the opportunity to work in every aspect of the charity and gain a true understanding of how a grassroots organisation is able to help disadvantaged communities. Beneficiaries turned volunteers are able to use this experience on applications for jobs and courses.

> 'Volunteering at the Women's Tea Corner on Saturdays has been highly fulfilling and interesting. The volunteers are well integrated into the sessions, with many being able to head workshops on their topic of choice. Furthermore, as an Afghan immigrant myself, it is extremely satisfying to aid other immigrants and refugees from Afghanistan and around the world in integrating better into their respective communities.' (Yasmin)

Conclusion

Whilst paid employment is 'perhaps the most significant mechanism, for the re-integration of refugees into mainstream society' (Newman et al., 2018 p.4), the CminaR research shows the complex range of needs. A number of themes emerge from these accounts demonstrating the holistic way organisations like ACAA can support their users' transitions to employment. First, it is important to note that employment support is integrated within wider services such as language learning, drop in advice and mentoring schemes. Employment related goals can be agreed as they emerge based on understanding of the individual's needs and can arise after initial contact for immigration, housing or legal queries. The term 'career' is not used. Volunteers report that productive discussions focus instead on work and livelihood, how people spend their time and their personal strengths.

Second, initiatives can be tailored and targeted when this is needed to make them accessible, particularly evidenced by those targeted at women and at young people. These address specific disadvantage such as gender based exclusion or educational disruption, but benefits also cascade. For example, young people benefit directly from the Saturday school and indirectly from the women's project, as women report being more confident in engaging with their children's schools and supporting their education.

Language support is shown to be critical, not just in the practicalities of being employable but also the affective links between language confidence and aspiration. Engaging with users in their mother tongue when needed is invaluable and can draw them in to services where their English will improve.

Cultural connection is central to the way trust is developed with clients. In particular, ACAA staff and volunteers understand more of the labour markets from which their clients have arrived and demonstrate empathy with the gaps in their history whilst unable to work due to fractured journeys and length immigration proceedings. It is notable that the case studies do not just pertain to those who have arrived as refugees, or arrived from Afghanistan; all forms of migration are evident. Trust is developed through a focus on what clients have in common as migrants rather than differentiating by a factor relating to their past, potentially transmitting stigma and reproducing disadvantage.

With a model placing primacy on the development of social support and community bonds, ACAA users can receive many benefits relating to their career development. Whilst at the outset the majority of users are a long way from the labour market ACAA articulate a 'journey of change' which shows how the range of service inputs leads to a variety of outputs linked to cumulative stages of change. This begins with…

- **establishing attendance and developing relationships;** *and moves through…*

- **contributing, either through sharing stories or bringing food,** *to end with…*

- **progressively greater integration allows for referral to external services (such as a PES),** *until…*

- **newly found knowledge, skills and connections can be shared with others.**

(Thompson, 2018)

Jobs and work might be part of this final stage. This shows how grassroots organisations can engage people a long way from the labour market and take them there through this journey.

The CminaR needs analysis concludes that refugees need inclusive, non-'othering' services which do not stigmatise their difference, and support from those who view their experiences as an asset rather than a problem, affirming their strengths rather than highlighting their deficits. ACAA are positioned to do just that. That said, some staff and volunteers lack formal training in career guidance theory and practice and the connections with the labour market needed to advocate for refugee clients. Whilst the CminaR material is written for those already trained in career development work, we suggest that a complementary programme training grassroots volunteers in particular forms of career support could lead to mutually beneficial collaboration and cross referral. A combination of grassroots and statutory services working in partnership may yet be the most effective way to meet the complex career development needs of those with refugee backgrounds.

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The career development of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals

Adrian Hancock

The career development of lesbian, gay and bisexual people is under-researched, especially in the UK. In this paper I begin by attempting to quantify and describe this group of people before exploring how LGB young people develop an identity in a heteronormative, and often oppressive, environment. I then provide a partial overview of the (mostly American) literature regarding LGB careers, including why and how LGB people choose certain occupations and the largely stereotyped nature of those decisions. I also explore how being LGB affects people at work. Finally, I offer some suggestions for career guidance practice with LGB individuals.

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Introduction

Although great strides have been made in countering discrimination against minority groups in the UK, discrimination (whether intentional or otherwise) continues to be experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals in the workplace, and homophobic bullying continues to be a problem in educational settings (Guasp, 2012). Young people therefore continue to be born into a heteronormative society, which means that:

> '…heterosexuality is the norm in culture, in society, in politics. Heteronormativity points out the expectation of heterosexuality as it is written into our world…heteronormativity emphasizes the extent to which everyone, straight or queer, will be judged, measured, probed, and evaluated from the perspective of the heterosexual norm.' (Chambers, 2003, p26).

In a heteronormative society, white heterosexual males still dominate many organisations (Hearn, 2004) - including schools and colleges - and LGB people are expected to conform to this heteronormative workplace. This article draws attention not only to the effects of heteronormativity on the careers of LGB individuals but also the need for career guidance practitioners to become more reflective in their practice in order to challenge society's (and possibly their own) heteronormative assumptions, prejudices and biases.

The primary focus of this article is on the careers of LGB individuals (although there is a paucity of literature on the careers of bisexual people). Since the focus is on sexuality rather than gender, I will not discuss issues such as transgender and non-binary identities, or gender dysphoria. I will, however, refer to 'LGBT' (and variations on this) where appropriate.

According to the Office for National Statistics (online) in 2016:

> 'Just over 1 million (2.0%) of the UK population aged 16 and over identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (1.2% identifying as gay or lesbian)… The population aged 16 to 24 were the age group most likely to identify as LGB in 2016 (4.1%).'

Also in 2016, in a survey of 17,000 Year 10 (14-15 years old) students in North Yorkshire, a significantly larger proportion (7%) said they were LGB (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016).

A distinction needs to be made between sexual orientation and sexual identity: the former refers to 'the direction of one's sexual or romantic attraction' (Giddens, 2006, p. 450), whilst the latter refers to how one defines oneself socially (Prince, 2013). Whilst a person's sexual orientation can be context-

specific, sexual identity is acknowledged to be socially constructed and fluid, especially amongst today's young people. Indeed, Savin-Williams (2005) says that 21st century teenagers are less likely to label themselves as lesbian or gay. This is exemplified by Coleman-Fountain's 2008 study of 5 lesbians and 14 gay men aged 16-21 in the north-east of England which found that, whilst some of his cohort still used terms such as gay, they questioned the meanings of these labels. For example, one young man argued that he was gay, even though he had sex with females (Coleman-Fountain, 2014). The ways in which sexual identity affects career choice are the focus of the next section.

LGB young people

Erikson (1968) famously posited that young people between the ages of 12-18 undergo a period of psychosocial development during which time they ask questions about their identity. Perhaps the best-known psychologist to develop Erikson's work on identity is Marcia (1980, 1987). He proposed that in late adolescence an individual can be in one of four states of identity formation: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion – all but the first indicating young people who are still searching for a complete identity. During their teenage years young people will be exploring their sexual identity which is one of the main 'tasks' of adolescence and 'a fundamental aspect of personal identity' (DePalma & Jennet, 2010, p. 20). Morrow (1997, p. 5) identified common threads in various lesbian and gay identity development models as follows: beginning to feel different; having 'identity confusion'; attempting to make light of one's feelings; identity tolerance, without full acceptance; identity acceptance; 'identity pride'; and finally, 'integration with other aspects of self'. As part of their exploration, LGB young people may adopt different identities as they try to develop both a social identity that allows them to 'fit in' with society, as well as developing a more personal, individual identity (Cooper, 2013, p. 18).

At the same time as many LGB young people are attempting to form a sexual identity, they are also expected to develop a vocational identity (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and make important educational or career-related decisions. Some authors (e.g. Morrow, 1997) argue that the dual focus on career decisions

and sexual identity creates tension and leads to a 'bottleneck effect' (Hetherington, 1991), whereby young LGB individuals focus on their sexual identity at the expense of their career identity, which can lead to greater indecision (Mobley & Slaney, 1996) and a lack of vocational maturity (Dunkle, 1996). Conversely, some LGB students may prioritise their career rather than their sexual identity (Morrow, 1996). Coleman and Hendry (1990) argue that teenagers are more successful in coping with stressful events if they deal with one issue at a time; dealing with both their sexual identity and career decisions is therefore likely to be problematic for some LGB individuals and this possible tension needs to be recognised by practitioners.

The process of coming to terms with one's sexuality is problematic for many LGB people and can be especially difficult for those from certain cultures which have less tolerant attitudes (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000). King et al. (2008, p.1) conducted a systematic review of the literature on the health of the LGB community and concluded that 'LGB people are at higher risk of mental disorder, suicidal ideation, substance misuse, and deliberate self-harm than heterosexual people'. Guasp (2012) also found that some of these issues (e.g. self-harm, depression, drug-taking) begin in adolescence.

Heteronormativity prevails in schools, and its presence creates an environment where homophobic bullying can flourish (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009) and where students can be seen to be 'policing the boundaries of sexuality for their school and for the wider society' (Norman & Galvin, 2006, p. 25). Although some authors suggest that homophobic bullying is in decline (e.g. Guasp, 2012), it remains a problem in many schools and colleges; for example 69.1% of respondents to an LGBT Youth Scotland study (2012) claimed to suffer from homophobic bullying. In comparison, 55% of the LGB students in Guasp's 2012 (Stonewall) study had suffered homophobic bullying (down from 65% in 2007). Warwick et al. (2004, p. 10) identified a number of effects that homophobic bullying can have on an individual, such as 'lack of sleep, loss of appetite, isolation, nervousness, and being upset or angry'; whilst Drydakis's (2014) review of the literature identified another two important effects on career choice, namely lower self-esteem and lower academic performance.

Other studies have also found that homophobic bullying has a negative effect on LGB young people's educational attainment (e.g. Guasp, 2012).

Homophobia – which can be defined as 'the dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people' (Oxford dictionaries online) – is, of course, not just an issue for school pupils since its effects are recognised as a wider issue for society (Equality Network, 2015). Homophobia is also widespread and shows similar patterns across different countries (Plummer, 2001).

LGB career development

In this section I explore some of the key variables at play in LGB career development. For many LGB individuals career decision-making is different from that of many straight people. And, of course, not all LGB individuals come to terms with their sexual identity until later in life, which could lead them to changing career when much older (Dunkle, 1996), thereby highlighting the need for lifelong careers advice. As Boatwright et al. (1996) found, accepting and then integrating a lesbian identity later in life can have a profound effect on one's career development.

Not surprisingly, given the time that they were developed, classic career theories simply did not consider the LGB community (e.g. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad & Herma, 1951; Holland, 1985; Krumboltz, 1976; Super, 1957). According to Ragins (2004) these theories failed to consider the discrimination faced by LGB individuals in the workplace and did not acknowledge the possibility of disrupted and non-linear career development for LGB people.

Some authors have investigated the applicability of some of these classic theories to the LGB community (e.g. Chung & Harmon, 1994). However, these tend to be one-off studies that make it hard to draw conclusions for the wider population. For example, Chung and Harmon tested the relevance of Holland's theory to gay men and found that 'compared to heterosexual men, gay men's interests were less Realistic and Investigative but were more Artistic and Social'.

Other writers have explored the relevance of Dawis and Lofquist's Work Adjustment Theory (1984) to LGB decision-making, with Lyons et al. (2005) finding that

the workplace environment was especially important to LGB individuals' job satisfaction.

With regard to social learning theories (e.g. Krumboltz, 1977; Lent et al, 1994), a number of authors have tested their relevance to the LGB community. For example, Morrow, Gore and Campbell (1996) considered the relevance of social cognitive career theory to the career development of lesbians and gay men and argued that widespread homophobia might affect one's self-efficacy – 'beliefs about one's ability to successfully perform particular behaviours or courses of action' (Lent et al., 2008, p.329). Morrow (1997) argues that self-efficacy can be improved by, for example, securing a placement in a non-stereotyped occupation which can also offer vicarious learning opportunities. However, as Morrow et al. (1996, p.141) say in relation to LGB career decision-making, 'the crucial issue may not be, "can I do it?", but "what will happen if I do?"'; thus drawing our attention to the part that external factors play in career decision-making. As Datti (2009) points out environmental factors such as the political climate and geography can have an effect on LGB individuals and they can internalise society's attitudes about sexuality and work (I say more about this later).

Lambert (1954, cited in Etherington, Hillerbrand & Etringer, 1989) was one of the first authors to consider the careers of 'homosexuals' in the USA, and although a number of authors since the mid to late 1980s have written about LGB careers or LGB counselling (e.g. Chung & Harmon, 1994; Colgan et al, 2008; Elliot, 1993; Morrow, 1997; Ragins, 2004; Schneider & Dimito, 2010), there is still a lack of literature on such matters, especially in the UK.

The bulk of the literature suggests that sexuality affects many LGB individuals' career decision-making directly (e.g. Croteau, Anderson, Ditefano & Kampa-Kokesh, 2000; Tilcsik, Anteby & Knight, 2015). For example 64% of Schneider and Dimito's (2010, p. 1361) cohort said that being LGBT+ had influenced their career and academic decisions, of whom 45% felt being LGBT+ had had a positive influence on their career a 'great deal'.

Young people's tendency to make gender-based, stereotyped career decisions is very well known (see,

for example, Gottfredson, 1981; Weisgram, Bigler & Liben, 2010; White & White, 2006). As Gadasi and Gati (2009, p. 903) put it, 'occupational stereotypes are internalized by both boys and girls from a young age'.

Although some writers argue that LGB career decision-making is becoming less stereotyped (Dati, 2009), others such as Tilscsik, Anteby & Knight (2015, p. 446) argue that 'gay men are more likely to be in female-majority occupations than are heterosexual men, and lesbians are more represented in male-majority occupations than are heterosexual women'. Gay men are more likely therefore to become hairdressers, air cabin crew, artists, actors or nurses, whilst lesbians are more likely to become training officers, probation officers, vehicle mechanics or engineers. However, according to the results of Schneider's (2010) Canadian study, lesbians felt that being gay opened up more doors, whilst gay men felt it closed them.

In one of the few British studies, Simpson (2005, p. 174), argues that there are a number of reasons why gay men seek out work in female-concentrated or gender-neutral jobs; for example, they can 'relax and be themselves' or employ empathy in their contacts with service users. Gay men also suffer from less role strain and experience no embarrassment, shame or discomfort by taking non-traditional jobs (Simpson, 2005), and are more comfortable with aesthetic labour than their straight counterparts (Huppatz, 2012).

The concentration of lesbians and gay men in certain occupations, or in specific organisations, might also be because they seek 'safe-havens…which holds that career decisions of LGB workers are driven by their desire to find careers, occupations and workplaces that allow them to disclose their sexual identity and protect them from workplace discrimination' (Ragins, 2015, p. 97). As Schneider (2010, p. 1365) notes: 'those who had experienced the highest level of anti-LGBT discrimination reported a greater impact of sexual orientation, less satisfaction with their career choices and narrower options.'

Therefore LGB individuals actively avoid certain occupations and/or employers (Chung, 1995; Hetherington, Hillerbrand & Etringer, 1989; Schneider & McCurdy-Myers, 1999) because they are seeking a tolerant/safe workplace.

Tilcsik et al. (2015) say that lesbians and gay men seek out occupations which provide them with task independence and/or the opportunity to utilise social perceptiveness - the 'accurate anticipation and reading of others' reactions' (p. 447). Ultimately, 'occupational segregation is shaped by gay men and lesbian workers' adaptation to potential discrimination and the dilemmas of disclosure they face in the workplace' (p. 470). In other words, jobs that require task independence and/or social perceptiveness afford lesbians and gay men the opportunity to manage potential difficulties at work.

Whatever accounts for LGB individuals' concentration in certain occupations, by entering these occupations, they often perpetuate occupational stereotypes (Chena & Keats, 2014). In addition, by entering stereotypical occupations, many LGB people are therefore restricting the range of occupations they consider (Fassinger, 1996). In such cases, are LGB people also more likely to simply respond to the locally available, and stereotyped, opportunity structures (Roberts, 1977)?

Experience in the workplace

Whilst there are many examples of LGB employees who are content in their work, research suggests that there are a number of issues that affect LGB individuals more than their heterosexual counterparts. Although the 2010 Equalities Act strengthened the position of LGB people in Great Britain, employer discrimination, and treatment at work, can still lead to LGB individuals suffering from anxiety and lower job satisfaction (Ozeren, 2014) and lower self-confidence (Keeton 2004). The consequence could be that 'anticipated or prior experiences with discrimination may lead to a re-assessment of career goals and "safe-haven" career decisions' (Ragins, 2015, p. 108).

In a study of 534 American gay and lesbian professionals, a third had been on the receiving end of physical or verbal harassment and many had resigned from their jobs as a result (Ragins et al, 2007). According to Parnell (2012), LGB employees who worked in heterosexist organisations had lower job satisfaction which could lead to poorer mental health (Ragins, 2015). Faced with a toxic work environment, LGB employees may adopt a number of coping strategies, of which there are five according to

Chung (2001, p. 39): 'acting' as heterosexual by having a heterosexual relationship; 'passing' as heterosexual; 'covering', i.e. hiding information to protect one's sexual identity; being 'implicitly out'; and being 'explicitly out'. LGB employees therefore learn how to organise and manage their sexual identity at work. However, these forms of what Goffman (1959) calls 'impression management', or what Croteau et al. (2008) refer to as 'sexual identity management', can take a heavy toll. Indeed, rather than being out at work it is often easier for individuals to stay 'in the closet' and 'hide their sexual orientation' (Rheineck, 2005, p. 88). Conversely, being out to colleagues can have positive effects such as an increase in one's physical and mental wellbeing (Croteau et al., 2008) and greater job satisfaction (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). However, the specific workplace and associated colleagues can influence whether someone comes out because 'concealment may actually be a necessary and adaptive decision for individuals in hostile environments' (Prince, 2013, p. 279).

The considerations for career guidance practice are clear: we may well have clients who are considering leaving, or have already left their career due to perceived or real discrimination, or as part of their coming out process. These clients may well seek our advice, but are we prepared for this and do we have strategies in place to support them? The next section therefore considers, albeit briefly, some possible responses to LGB clients.

Implications for practice

There are various ways in which career practitioners can help LGB clients and there is an increasing amount of literature on this topic (e.g. Beck, Rausch, Lane & Wood, 2016; Carroll & Gilroy, 2001; Datti, 2009; Hancock & Taylor, 2018; Kumashiro, 2002; Morgan Brown, 1991; Maree, 2014; Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1997; Pollock & Meek, 2016; Prince, 2013;) and some innovative work has taken place with LGB individuals (e.g. Hutchinson et al., 2011). Also, Morrow and Hawxhurst (1997) suggest that career practitioners can empower LGB individuals at the personal, interpersonal, and social/political levels. In a similar vein, Hancock and Taylor (2018) suggest what 'progressive and radical' career positions (Watts, 1996) might look like; for example, careers offices could

easily become more inclusive by displaying Stonewall's poster 'Some People Are Gay, Get Over It' and/or their other posters specifically referencing lesbians and bisexuals. Practitioners could also become more familiar with LGB culture (Beck et al, 2016). Moreover, if LGB people are still making stereotyped career decisions practitioners might also want to broaden their clients' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997).

However, it could be argued that an important starting point for all practitioners is for us to consider our own prejudices, biases and stereotypes (Pope et al, 2004) and how much we unconsciously adopt heteronormative ways of seeing the world. As part of his 'Career Counseling with Underserved Populations' model, Pope (2011) outlines a series of 13 questions that practitioners can ask themselves before embarking on work with members of minority groups – these have been adapted for work with LGB clients by Beck et al. (2016, p. 203), as follows:

1. What are my experiences in working with and advocating for students identifying as LGBQQ? [lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning]
2. What thoughts and feelings do I have toward youth identifying as LGBQQ?
3. What supports do I have in place to help address any harmful attitudes, prejudices and biases I may have?
4. What preconceived thoughts do I have about what types of colleges students identifying as LGBQQ should attend?
5. How will my reactions impact my work in creating an LGBQQ-inclusive college and career readiness program?

Conclusion

This paper presents an overview of some of the salient aspects of LGB career development. I believe that Beck et al's 5 questions, as well as other suggestions contained within the literature, provide a useful checklist for practitioners working with LGB clients and which could be easily adapted for work with other minority groups. Implicit in this paper is the need for continuing reflective practice and continuing professional development, both of which are central to the work of a modern careers adviser in a global society. We need to recognise that not all of our

clients are heterosexual and adopt strategies to support each client's individual needs. Finally, this paper highlights the need for more British research into the career development of LGB (and T) individuals, as there is a clear and unacceptable gap in our understanding of LGBT career development.

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Heteronormativity and barriers to successful career interventions: An exploratory study

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This paper reports on the findings of a small-scale action research study. The aim of the research was to examine the extent to which heteronormative bias exists amongst a small sample of career practitioners. This was explored within the context of a simulated one-to-one consultation which research participants viewed online. A central question for the research was the extent to which practitioners operated from a heteronormative perspective and the potential impact this could have on 'LGB/T' clients. The main finding from the research was that the majority of participants seemed to operate through such a lens which could have detrimental consequences for clients. Whilst the research has its limitations and the findings cannot be generalised, it raises important questions both for future research and practice.

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Introduction

Widespread discrimination exists in society for those occupying a minority sexual orientation status. Whilst there have been positive shifts in social approval and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB/T) people since the 1970s (Orzechowicz, 2016) a recent national survey (Government Equalities Office, 2018) found that over two thirds (68%) of all respondents with a minority sexual orientation said they had 'avoided holding hands in public' with a same-sex partner and similarly, seventy percent said they had avoided being 'open about their sexual orientation' for fear of a negative reaction.

The survey revealed that in terms of openness in the workplace, heteronormativity persists. Sixty one percent of those taking part in the survey identified as lesbian or gay. This quote highlights the problem of heteronormativity in the words of one of the respondents:

"'People often assume I am straight, due to wearing a wedding ring and having 2 children. However, in the instance when they ask about my husband, I have to consciously evaluate whether me telling them I have a wife will impact the choices they will make in relation to the company." Lesbian woman.' (Government Equalities Office, 2018).

The aim of this research study was to explore heteronormativity amongst career practitioners and the potentially negative impact this could have upon clients. To our knowledge, this research is the first study to explore the existence of heteronormativity within career development practice, although similar research exists for 'doctor-patient' interactions (Utamsingh et al., 2015). The main impetus for the research stemmed from anecdotal evidence and personal experiences of one of the researchers, who, in her role as an educator and assessor, had observed how practitioners who were committed to valuing diversity, would still make heteronormative assumptions about clients.

If evidence of heteronormative bias was found, a subsidiary aim was to help raise awareness of this through a) the experience of taking part in the research and b) the debrief process and the provision of CPD resources. Essentially, the research had the potential to be an action research study (McNiff, 2013). Evidence of heteronormative bias, defined in the following section, was examined specifically during the first stage of a one-to-one consultation between client and career practitioner. This is where 'the foundations are laid - the rapport, an agreed purpose and an agreed way of working' (Hambly and Bomford, 2018, p. 65).

Understanding heteronormativity

The concept of heteronormativity is said to have emerged from early feminist work, for example, Rich's (1980) concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Jackson, 2006, p. 105). The literature on heteronormativity now covers an array of subject areas, for example, doctor-patient interaction (Utamsingh et al., 2015) and parenting styles (Averett, 2016), but there is a dearth of research in relation to career guidance. The concept has also been defined in terms of sexual orientation and/or gender.

Averett (2016, p. 191) has defined this in terms of 'a set of overlapping processes that occur on various levels - including legal, cultural, institutional, discursive, and interpersonal/interactional - that produce and reproduce heterosexuality, and its assumption of two, distinct, complementary genders as normal, natural and ideal'. Thus, Avarett's (2016) definition incorporates both sexuality *and* gender. In contrast, Utamsingh et al. (2015, p. 566) defines heteronormativity as '…the presumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation and can result in discrimination against the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) population'. In this latter definition, heteronormativity is defined exclusively in relation to sexual orientation but clearly the problem of heteronormativity can apply equally to both sexual orientation *and* gender.

This is an increasingly complex area for research, not least in the diversity and range of acronyms used to describe and classify the range of sexual minority identities. McFadden (2015) refers to the 'LGBT' population, Averett (2016) discusses 'LGBTQ' (Q refers to queer) and Orzechowicz (2016) uses the acronym 'LGB'. In fact, 'LGB' is the '…most commonly used acronym in research' (Utamsingh et al., 2015, p. 2). However, it is increasingly recognised that careless use of the acronym 'LGBT' should be avoided due to the way in which it conflates sexual orientation with gender identity (Donovan & Barnes, 2017). As Pichler (2017, p. 197) argues, the term '…artificially collapses distinct identities among sexual and gender minorities'. In preference, 'LGB and/or T' is preferred (Donovan & Barnes, 2017) because LGB refers exclusively to sexual orientation, whereas, someone identifying as transgender may (or may not) identify as LGB - they

may identify as heterosexual. However, it is important to recognise the existence of other, sexual minority identities such as those incorporated into the acronym 'LGBPA' (Utamsingh et al., 2015): A refers to 'asexual' and P refers to 'pansexual'. Indeed, it needs to be recognised that heteronormativity can negatively impact upon people with different gender identities.

It is important to recognise that heteronormativity does not necessarily equate with intent and may not be conscious. Herbert (2013) distinguishes between 'unconscious' and 'implicit' bias arguing that although both are used interchangeably, the former is more outside of our control while the latter necessitates a greater degree of responsibility as we become more self-aware. Heteronormative bias can therefore be unconscious or implicit, but the ideal is to bring it into consciousness and eradicate it from our practice. Clearly, heteronormative bias has the potential to impact in any service work with clients but is more likely to impact negatively upon those who operate and identify outside of the heteronormative stereotype. While someone may be overtly supportive of 'LGB and/or T' rights, they may unconsciously operate from and make assumptions that reflect a heteronormative stance. Thus, unconscious bias is:

'…a term used to describe the associations that we hold which, despite being outside our conscious awareness, can have a significant influence on our attitudes and behaviour. Regardless of how fair minded we believe ourselves to be, most people have some degree of unconscious bias' (Herbert, 2013, p. 1).

Methodology

The focus of this research was the relationship established between the practitioner and client in the first stage of a career consultation. The building blocks to achieving this 'include verbal and nonverbal responses…resting on a firm foundation of empathy, respect, curiosity and compassion' (Hambly & Bomford, 2018, p. 41). Heteronormative bias has been found to have a negative impact on certain sexual minority groups (Utamsingh et al., 2015) and clearly has the potential to hinder the development of rapport in any service provision. This has been widely recognised in the areas of sexism and racism (Devlin, 2018) but also in other spheres, for example, LGBTQ

parents 'resisting heteronormativity' in an attempt to encourage their children to disrupt gender norms (Averett, 2016).

The research explored whether participants would notice the heteronormative bias built into the video clip of the interview – particularly those who do not identify with a minority sexual orientation. The video clip was ten minutes long and demonstrated the foundation stage whereby relationship, purpose and ground rules are established. The heteronormative bias was introduced during the first few minutes of the interaction when the client mentioned that her partner was parking the car - the practitioner responded by checking whether 'he' was happy to wait, thus translating the gender-neutral term 'partner' into the gendered pronoun 'he'. From the perspective of a client who identifies as 'LGB and/or T' this has the potential to restrict openness and diminish rapport. Initially, the research had also hoped to explore this in terms of criteria such as sexuality, age and length of time in practice. Unfortunately, the sample was very homogenous which prevented such analysis. However, this is one of the key recommendations advocated by the researchers for future research.

Research sample and ethics

A snowball sample of thirty qualified career practitioners was created all of whom resided in the UK (mainly England). The participants varied in terms of the following criteria: age, ethnicity, qualifications, employment status and length of time in practice (see table 1 below). This shows that the sample is skewed towards being female (24/30), white (26/30), older (only one participant was below the age of 30) and the sample is largely heterosexual (27/30). However, there is no way to ascertain levels of honesty in the responses participants gave, particularly in relation to personal information about sexual orientation. While only three participants chose 'prefer not to say', twenty-seven chose 'heterosexual' but there is no way for us to be sure that this accurately reflects their status.

Firstly, ethical approval for the research was granted from the university ethics committee where the co-researcher works. This explicitly included the need to withhold key information from participants at the start of the study, namely, the focus upon heteronormative bias. However, central to attaining

Table 1.

Demographic		Nº		Nº		Nº		Nº		Nº		Nº		Nº
Age	20-30	1	31-40	8	41-50	9	51-60	12	61-70	-	70+	-		
Ethnicity	White	26	Dual heritage	1	Black/ African/ Caribbean	2	Prefer not to say	1	Asian	-				
Gender	Male	6	Female	24	Intersex	-	Non-binary	-						
Sexuality	Hetero-sexual	27	Lesbian/ Gay	-	Prefer not to say	3	Other comparable	1						
Qualification	Level 6+	23	NVQ4	5	Pending	1	Other comparable	1						
Length of practice	<1 year	2	1<2 years	4	2<5 years	4	5<10 years	7	10<20 years	5	20+	8		
Employer(s)	Freelance	3	Freelance plus employed	2	School/FE	8	Private company	5	Council	2	HE	6	Other	4

this ethical approval was the need to manage this aspect of the research carefully and sensitively and to gain their fully informed consent post-hoc. The need to de-brief participants was included in the application for ethical approval which made clear that participants would be fully informed about the focus of the research and reminded of their right to withdraw from the study. Secondly, an advert was placed on LinkedIn (a professional networking platform) and those who responded were asked to contact the co-researcher by email. They were subsequently sent a combined participant information/consent form and in order to maintain their anonymity they were asked to provide a unique identifier and to liaise with the co-researcher at all times. They were assured that at no time would their identity be shared with the other researcher who might know them professionally. Once consent forms were received, the next stage involved sending participants a follow up email containing a private link to the YouTube video and a proforma which they could use to record their observations/reflections. Participants were instructed to evaluate a short video clip of a stage one career guidance consultation and to assess/reflect upon this according to three criteria: (i) effective communication/ rapport; (ii) an agreement as to the purpose and process; and (iii) agreed ground rules such as confidentiality, time, being open and honest. They were informed that this was a simulation and not a 'real' interview, the practitioner and client were both acting. However, participants were *not* informed that a key focus of the study was heteronormative bias as this would have pre-empted the purpose of the study and skewed the data.

The researchers surmised that failure to notice the heteronormative assumption on the part of the practitioner could be seen to constitute 'implicit or unconscious bias' (Devlin, 2018) but, could also be an example of what Drath (1990) refers to as 'cultural blindness' – 'We see with our culture-bound norms and expectations, accept them as given, and cannot examine them for what they are - that is, we cannot see through them' (cited in Cox et al., 2018, p. 131). This research study was therefore potentially sensitive and had to be managed carefully, particularly for practitioners who adhere to professional codes of ethics. The message that needed to be conveyed to all research participants but, in particular those who did not notice the heteronormative assumption,

was that heteronormative bias does not necessarily equate to homophobia. As Kitzinger (2005, p. 478) argues: 'Complicity with heteronormativity does not necessarily imply prejudiced attitudes or beliefs'. A practitioner who consciously advocates for 'LGB and/ or T' rights may still have a degree of implicit bias and make heteronormative assumptions. If evidence of heteronormative bias was uncovered in this research we would need to ensure that, as part of the debrief process, participants were provided with an explanation of implicit bias and selective attention and receive resources to support their reflective practice. The opportunity to discuss this further with the researchers was offered.

Central to the de-brief process was therefore the provision of a set of CPD resources, relating not only to the issue of heteronormativity but to other aspects of practice. Nevertheless, it was essential that those participants who failed to notice the inbuilt heteronormative assumption in the video would be reassured that this did not mean that they were necessarily overtly homophobic. It was important therefore that participants were introduced to ideas around unconscious bias and provided with resources which would help them to become more aware of this in their practice. This was the action research part of the study.

Data analysis and research findings

Analysis

A qualitative approach was adopted for this exploratory study, particularly in relation to data collection. Participants were asked to record their observations on a proforma and, as explained earlier, were guided by three criteria: (i) effective communication/ rapport; (ii) an agreement as to the purpose and process; and (iii) agreed ground rules such as confidentiality, time, being open and honest. The data collected was therefore textual and qualitative. In order to analyse the data, the researchers adopted a thematic analysis which involved systematically coding and categorising the data. Four categories emerged from this thematic analysis which were grouped as follows: (i) heteronormative bias; (ii) physical environment; (iii) body language and

(iv) use of reflecting back. These categories were emergent and iterative and reflect the themes and issues raised by participants themselves. A small part of the data analysis involved limited and descriptive use of numbers. This was mostly in the form of counts and only limited use of percentages, as the numbers were too small to lend themselves to such analysis. Researcher triangulation was employed in the coding process to assist with the development of categories as part of the thematic analysis. In practice, the researchers coded the data separately and independently which acts as a useful cross check of internal validity. This is a technique which is often employed to help improve validity in qualitative research studies (see Barbour, 2001).

Findings

Of the thirty participants, only five (16.6%) noticed the heteronormative assumption made by the practitioner in the video. In contrast, thirteen (43.3%) commented on the role that the physical environment played in putting the client at ease; seventeen (56.6%) commented on the body language of the practitioner; and fourteen (46.6%) on the use of reflecting back. The numbers are too small to conduct further analysis, particularly in terms of criteria such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation etc. but the data clearly shows that practitioners were less likely to notice heteronormativity than other aspects of rapport

building. For future analysis, it might be possible to employ a non-parametric statistical test such as a binomial proportion test to see if this is a significant finding. This is definitely something to explore further and, for future research, a mixed-methods approach could be adopted with a larger and more diverse sample.

Table 2 (see below) provides an overview of demographic information related to the five participants who noticed the heteronormative assumption in the video.

Table 2 shows that of the five participants who noticed the heteronormative assumption most were female, white, older and all were heterosexual (as far as we know). Despite a significant percentage of respondents coming from a school/ FE/ HE background, only one participant from that sector noticed the assumption. However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this given the homogenous nature of the sample. Future research could explore links between demographic criteria such as sexual orientation and heteronormativity to see whether any correlations or statistical inferences are found. It would also be interesting to investigate the training that practitioners received from both initial training and the different type of employer.

Table 2.

Respondent	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Sexuality	Qualification	Years of practice	Employer(s)
1	51-60	White	Male	heterosexual	Diploma in Career Guidance	20+	Private company
2	51-60	White	Female	heterosexual	Diploma in Career Guidance	20+	Private company
3	51-60	Black/ African/ Caribbean	Female	heterosexual	NVQ4 Advice and Guidance/ LDSS	10<20	Freelance/ senior associate
4	51-60	White	Female	heterosexual	Qualification in Career Guidance/ Development	1<2 years	Freelance plus employed
5	41-50	White	Female	heterosexual	NVQ4 Advice andGuidance/ LDSS Qualification in Career Guidance/ Development	10<20	Freelance School/FE

Impact of heteronormativity

Another area requiring further research is the potential impact of heteronormativity on clients. To our knowledge there has been no such research conducted in the careers field. Wider research in health and other areas shows that heteronormative assumptions made by practitioners can lead to patients being less open and less trusting. At the end of the study, following on from the de-brief resources being provided to participants on the issue of heteronormativity, one of the five participants who had actually noticed the bias in this study commented on its potential impact:

> 'The adviser did make the assumption that the client's partner was male, which was not necessarily inclusive and could have made the client feel uncomfortable, had the assumption been incorrect.' (Participant A)

The action research part of the study consisted of helping practitioners to become aware of heteronormativity and how this may impact upon their practice. Participants were provided with de-brief materials which included an overview of the research findings. The debrief was communicated by email and summarised how many respondents had commented upon the following: (i) heteronormative bias; (ii) physical environment; (iii) body language and (iv) use of reflecting back. As outlined in the methodology, this was managed sensitively and in accordance with the ethical agreement. A CPD resource was provided which carefully outlined the nature of heteronormativity and indeed, implicit and unconscious bias, an explanation that this does not necessarily equate to homophobia, and an explanation of how selective attention works. The researchers received unsolicited responses from participants suggesting that this process had been managed sensitively and that, regardless of whether participants had noticed the bias or not, they found the experience and debrief helpful:

> 'Thank you so much for sharing the feedback. The information is fascinating and will certainly help me and my colleagues to reflect on language used and the topic of unconscious bias. Please also include me in any further research activities.' (Participant B).

Limitations

The research was small scale, qualitative and exploratory. It has highlighted the need for further research and has raised more questions than it can possibly answer. There are a number of limitations to the study which must be acknowledged and considered before putting forward any recommendations. Firstly, we need to consider the way in which the sample was generated (via LinkedIn) and that it is a) self-selecting; and b) not as diverse as we had hoped. The fact that the sample was generated via one of the researcher's contacts on LinkedIn means that it is a self-selecting sample. The sample is largely white, heterosexual, female and older. At this stage, there is no way of knowing how typical (or atypical) this sample is of the workforce. This is certainly something to explore more fully for future research.

Secondly, the research was conducted remotely and hence the researchers had little control over participant engagement with the video. Whether respondents viewed the video alone or in the company of others was beyond our control which could have introduced bias. For example, might it be possible that those participants who picked up on the 'heteronormative bias' viewed the video on more than one occasion?

Thirdly, the fact that they were observing rather than experiencing the interaction may also have increased the degree of selective attention bias. When a practitioner is faced with a real client, it is likely that they are more emotionally engaged and present to the client's concerns and experience. However, while selective attention bias may on the one hand be a limitation it also helps to explain heteronormative bias in action. Attention is a limited resource and the brain has to select what to focus on and what to ignore (Broadbent, 1958; Treisman, 1964; Chabris & Simons, 2010; Eysenck & Keane, 2015). Whilst participants were asked to observe and reflect upon the foundation stage of a one to one consultation, they were not directed by the researchers to focus upon specific tactics. In leaving the task open, participants would use their own quality framework to evaluate what they observed. The way in which the brain selected what to pay attention to was likely to be influenced by pre-existing schemas or frameworks created

through training, professional experience and previous exposure to 'LBG and/or T' issues. The practitioner's own concerns such as body language, pace, questioning style etc. may have taken priority and led to other factors being missed.

Conclusion

The main finding to emerge from this research was that the majority of participants (25/30) failed to notice the heteronormative assumption, on the part of the career practitioner, in the early stages of the simulated one to one consultation interview. The practitioner assumed that the client's partner was male and referred to her partner as 'he'. It is important for practitioners, in all spheres of work, to be aware of the issue of heteronormativity and its potential impact on clients. The researchers acknowledge that the sample was small (N=30) but in the context of a qualitative research study, less so. Despite the methodological limitations, the research suggests that heteronormativity could have a detrimental impact on career development practice. There is therefore the need for further research in this area and training of practitioners. It is possible to conclude that some of the practitioners who took part in the study, might have been operating through a heteronormative lens which could potentially have detrimental consequences for their clients.

Recommendations

Within the context of these findings and given the paucity of research in the field, the following recommendations are advocated. Firstly, further research with a larger, more inclusive (quota) sample that better reflects the population from which it is drawn, and which explores the link between a range of demographic criteria (including sexuality) and heteronormativity. Secondly, future research should attempt to reduce the potential for selective attention bias, in particular ensuring that participants are emotionally engaged with the client. This will increase the amount of information/cues that can be processed. For example, rather than watching a video, they could be present at a simulated role-play using the goldfish bowl method. This could also potentially help to

reduce the demand characteristics associated with the task. Thirdly, the development of initial and CPD learning resources based on models which are proven to reduce bias, for example 'non-heteronormative communication' (Utamsingh, et al. 2015) and 'sexuality based sensitivity' training (Orzechowicz, 2016). These resources could be designed for blended delivery but should contain an experiential element to ensure that any implicit bias is addressed.

● ●

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Book reviews

Creative Career Coaching: Theory into practice by Liane Hambly and Ciara Bomford, Abingdon/New York, Routledge, 2019, £24.99 (paperback) ISBN-13: 978-1-138-54359-1; £24.99 (e-book) ISBN-13: 978-1-351-00642-2.

The Career Coaching Toolkit by Julia Yates, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, £22.56 (paperback) ISBN-978-1-138-05730-2; £21.43 (e-book) ISBN-978-1-315-16492-2.

Reviewed by Dr Michelle Stewart, NICEC Fellow.

Creative Career Coaching: Theory into practice

Hambly and Bomford respectfully recognise the beneficial work undertaken by career development professionals and acknowledge the high level of skills and distinct body of knowledge on which this contribution is founded. Concurrently, they share their own considerable experience and knowledge to enable reflective practitioners to explore and develop new ways of working that are highly relevant to today's world of uncertainty.

Written in a straightforwardly accessible style, Creative Career Coaching's thoughtful consideration of creativity and innovation alongside more traditional approaches, provides a valuable resource for both career development students undertaking initial training and the experienced careers practitioner seeking to enhance their skills and explore new ways of working.

The book is divided into 4 sections, with each chapter starting with a concise overview and ending with references. The first section sets the scene and provides a brief review of career theory, before offering some illuminating insights from neuropsychology pertinent to career coaching. The next two sections are structured around managing career interventions and addressing themes common to these interactions. The final section offers useful thoughts and insights to support the well-being of career practitioners themselves. The use of headings and sub headings structure the content enabling the reader to dip in and out of the book with ease, especially where links to earlier (or later) consideration of the same topic are included. However, to fully understand the aim of the book and terminology, time should be taken to read the preface.

Adopting a practical skills-based approach the book clearly sets out how to undertake effective career interventions with clients, extending in places to consider special needs and mental health issues. Focusing on the creative career coaching model it considers both process and the content, systematically leading the reader through the different stages and attending to the required skills. Especially useful personally were the chapter on digital coaching and the considerations around information provision, including LMI (opportunity awareness). Throughout, the book introduces creative activities and current theoretical models with certain ones more fully explained than others. It is further enhanced by figures, tables, activities and case studies, with some integral to the text and others supplementary.

In drawing the book to a close, Hambly and Bomford state that 'to be able to give our best to our clients, we also need to give our best to ourselves, using our skills and knowledge to nourish ourselves, develop communities of practice and take pride in our work' (p.221). This book is testament of their having done this and I count myself privileged to be one of many who will draw on its insight and creativity to further develop my own professional practice.

Career Coaching Toolkit

In addition to being valuable in its own right, the Career Coaching Toolkit usefully complements the work of Hambly and Bomford. Yates' book uniquely enables career practitioners to apply a range of different approaches to client interventions that draw on recent and emerging theory. After a clearly written

introduction which includes a discerning reflection on the issue of boundaries, each chapter is structured around one of eleven career dilemmas that will be familiar to many, such as 'What do I want from a job?'. To support the client in addressing the identified dilemma Yates skilfully guides the career practitioner through three possible techniques, respectively accompanied by a 'Why it works' box which outlines the underlying process and a second box setting out the research evidence base. In all there are over 30 different techniques, each offering a meaningful addition to the practitioner's tool-box for use in one-to-ones and some in group settings. Following a considered review of some multi-purpose tools in the penultimate chapter (e.g. mind maps), the focus turns to reflect on issues around ethical practice and offers words of reassurance steeped in experience that considerately address potential concerns of practitioners seeking to develop their practice.

The book is thoughtfully and insightfully written, revealing a real understanding of the desire among career practitioners to support others in resolving career dilemmas of the 21st century. Not all the tools and techniques will appeal to everyone but those with the courage to try techniques that appeal will find themselves indebted to Yates for sharing her experiences of what works and bringing this eclectic mix of tools, techniques and approaches together.

Career Guidance for Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism, edited by T. Hooley, R.G. Sultana and R. Thomsen, New York/Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, pp. 276, £93.50 (hardback) ISBN 978-1-138-087738-5; £20 (e-book) ISBN 978-1-315-11051-6.

Reviewed by Gill Frigerio, Associate Professor, University of Warwick and NICEC Fellow.

Whilst the origins of career guidance are associated with creating a fair and just society, our profession has needed reminding from time to time about the political nature of our work and the potential for us to be part of the problem of inequality, rather than solutions. The term 'social justice' has been used to label these discussions by Barrie Irving, Nancy Arthur and others, in recent years. The publication reviewed here is now part of a wider project to position social justice front and centre of discussion of our work and has been unmissable at recent conferences, events and online discussions.

The authors are known to many for their wide concern with theory, policy and practice and are all Fellows of NICEC. Tristram Hooley holds both academic and policy focused positions and is known for his commitment to communicating with a practitioner audience through blogging, use of twitter and now a podcast. Rie Thomsen is a researcher of lifelong learning and guidance from Denmark known for her distinctive and imaginative approach to reflexive practice. Ronald Sultana, Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Malta, has a track record of reminding the dominant voices in our field to listen to perspectives from the Global South. It is dedicated to Bill Law, who would be delighted with it.

This edited volume is very much at the theory end of the authors' range of outputs. As a collection of chapters from a truly global list of contributors it offers a series of in-depth and sometimes competing perspectives on if and how career guidance can be socially just. Following a full introductory chapter by all three editors, the text is divided into 3 sections: 'Understanding the neoliberal context', 'Building theories for change' and 'Research for practice'. There are contributions from 22 authors from 10 different countries, although the Global South is only represented by Brazil.

The introduction locates the work in our times, opening with a quote from the US Presidential Inauguration of Donald Trump and provides an overview of key concepts such as social justice and neoliberalism, as well as their impact on careers work. The latter term needs some careful deconstructing, suffering as it does from some 'conceptual sprawl', but its influence in career guidance is identified through our overreliance on individualistic psychological methods as well as the configurations through which career guidance is organised and provided, and indeed internalised by practitioners and clients alike.

As might be expected from a text book which seeks to build theory, the book is densely packed with more

detailed consideration than some previously published overviews have been able to cover. This leads to some more nuanced positions emerging, for example Pouyard and Guichard advocate for active life design for sustainable and decent work, whereas previously I have heard 'life design' dismissed as evidence of the symbolic violence of neoliberalism through responsibilisation.

The book provides a thought-provoking deconstruction of the politics embedded in the humanistic and developmental tradition on which careers work has relied, and seeks to develop a new emancipatory stance which foregrounds learning. I found the book to be prophetic and particular chapters will add value to the reading lists of postgraduate professional courses. A careful reading could certainly stimulate practitioners to innovate and take a social justice lens to their practice and could be turned into activities, for example Buchanan's chapter on social media could be a basis for learners researching digital footprint and class. That said, the price tag means I suspect most readers will be accessing it through a university library.

The anchoring to neoliberalism and inclusion under Routledge's series banner of 'Education, Neoliberalism and Marxism' locates the work within a particular time of social change, something that career development theories have not necessarily taken into account adequately. One slight concern could be that this may date the work, or worse, provide scope for those with different political leanings to dismiss it. I hope not.

It is a shame that few practitioner voices feature in the book, perhaps reflecting their embedding within the very neoliberal contexts that can make it hard for practitioners to respond. The final section, research for practice, went some way to articulate how practitioners can be brought into research. As this speaks to my interests, I found the Danish authors chapter on research circles and Hazel Reid and Linden West's chapter on auto/biographical research to be the most impactful for me.

The second volume in the same series has now just been published and promises to look at differentiated experiences of career and practice responses. This first volume sets that up well, and the (re)conceptualization

of career as something that can be both learned and critiqued is very welcome. I await with interest an opportunity to review the second volume.

Call for papers | Forthcoming events

Open call for papers for the October 2019 issue:
Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

The theme of next issue of the journal will centre around career learning and the interplay between theory, practice and research. Accordingly, papers are invited that explore career learning at different stages of career development, from primary through to later working life. Topics and settings might include:

- The development of practice to address the Gatsby benchmarks in schools and colleges;

- Re-defining the role of Career Leaders in schools and the place of theory;

- Higher education, employability, and career readiness for unknown futures;

- The place of career coaching and talent management in retention and progression in employment;

- Research based community activities supporting career learning for disadvantaged, vulnerable or marginalised groups.

For enquiries and expressions of interest, please contact the editors:

Michelle Stewart: michelle.stewart@canterbury.ac.uk

Lyn Barham: lynbarham@gmail.com

Potential authors should note the following deadlines:

Initial expressions of interest:
15th May 2019 - *supported by an article title and brief abstract (100 words)*

Full draft article: 26th June 2019
Final corrected submissions: 31st July 2019

NICEC Events Calendar 2019

Date and Time	Event	Place
Monday 13 May 2019 2pm-5pm	*Network meeting* Returners and transitions – Julia Yates	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London (Rooms 5 & 6)
Thursday 20 June 2019 5pm-6.30pm	*Seminar* 'The Career Professional Pipeline' Professional skills shortages – CDI (TBC) The Apprenticeship pathways – Dr Michelle Stewart	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London (Room 9)
Friday 20 September 2019 11am-1pm 2pm-5pm	*Network meeting* Social Justice and decent work: theory, policy and practice – Tristram Hooley	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London (Rooms 5 & 6)
TBC	*Free CPD Event for Members:* CDI/NICEC At the Cutting Edge: Research into Practice	TBC
Monday 18 November 2019 5pm-6.30pm	*Seminar*	Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, Euston, London (Room 9)
Event Costs:		

Seminars and Network Meetings:
- included in membership fees for NICEC Fellows and members.
- £20 for seminars and £40 for network meetings for non-members.

Forthcoming events

CDI Training, Conference and Events Calendar 2019

For more information and booking, visit the CDI website: www.thecdi.net

Date	Time	Event	Place
Tuesday 7 May 2019 Tuesday 18 June 2019 Monday 9 September 2019	9.30am-3.30pm	Understanding Autism for Careers Professionals	Exeter Manchester London
Tuesday 14 May 2019 Wednesday 19 June 2019 Thursday 10 October 2019	9.30am-4pm	Optimising Careers Outcomes for YP SEND	Manchester London Birmingham
Start dates: Thursday 23 May 2019 Friday 21 June 2019	9.30am-4.30pm	CDI Certificate in Careers Leadership	Newcastle London
Wednesday 12 June 2019 Tuesday 9 July	9.30am-4pm	Advanced Career Guidance and Coaching Skills	Manchester London
Wednesday 19 June 2019	9.30am-4pm	Insight into Labour Market Information	Newcastle
11-12 July 2019		National Careers Leader & Learning Conference 2019 – Developing Effective Career Programmes: Evaluation and Impact *A two-day national conference designed to support the Government's Careers Strategy and Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges.* (Speakers include Sir John Holman; Clare MacDonald, Assistant Director DfE; Professor Tristram Hooley; Marion Morris; Emily Tanner, Head of Research at The Careers & Enterprise Company.)	University of Derby, Enterprise Centre, Derby.

Webinars (free to CDI members):

Date	Time	Event	Place
Tuesday 7 May 2019	2pm-3pm	Taking a year out: How to make the best use of time	Online
Friday 10 May 2019	4pm-5pm	Supporting students in careers in football	Online
Wednesday 5 June 2019	2pm-3pm	Navigating UCAS	Online
Wednesday 19 June 2019	2pm-3pm	Effective personal statements & supporting references	Online

ABOUT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Career Development Institute (CDI) is the UK-wide professional body for the career development sector. We have a growing membership of 4500 individual members and affiliate organisations and speak with one voice for a lively and diverse sector.

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We have a key role to play in influencing UK skills policy as it affects those with whom career development practitioners work and a clear purpose to improve and assure the quality and availability of career development services for all throughout the UK.

All CDI members subscribe to a Code of Ethics, which is supported by a strong disciplinary process, and subscribe to the principles of CPD.

Importantly the CDI is responsible for the UK Register of Career Development Professionals; the National Occupational Standards (NOS: CD); the first Career Progression Pathway for the sector; UK Career Development Awards; QCD and QCG/D qualifications; the CDI Academy; the Careers Framework and a UK-wide CPD programme.

Below are a few of our major achievements:

• A powerful brand supported by an evolving website **www.thecdi.net**; social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) presence; and quarterly magazine *Career Matters*;

• A schedule of CPD, skills training, webinars and conferences based on market analysis and members' training needs;

• A growing media and lobbying presence with the CDI recognised as the *expert voice* in the field; advising politicians, speaking at conferences and commenting on policy;

• The establishment of the UK Career Development Awards – ten sponsored awards including *Careers Adviser/Coach of the Year* and *Careers Leader of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award*;

• Clear focus on professional identity and increasing the professionalism of the sector through our influence, ownership and development of the QCD and QCG/D and the CDI Academy including the new *CDI Certificate in Careers Leadership*.

ASSURING QUALITY

The CDI has a critical role to play in setting standards and articulating what quality looks like for the sector. Importantly we are an awarding body, managing the Qualification in Career Development (previously the QCG/D) and the UK Register for Career Development Professionals, which is pivotal to our ongoing quality agenda and is fast becoming recognised as the sector's equivalent to chartered status.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with NICEC on the Journal and the NICEC/CDI research-focused events which take place twice a year across the UK.

The Journal is made available to all CDI members via our website.

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