

Vocation, Vocation, Vocation:

placing meaning
in the foreground
of career decision-making

Edited by Hazel Reid

Centre for Career & Personal Development



'Deep in their roots, all flowers keep the light.' - Theodore Roethke



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Introduction

Hazel Reid

This occasional paper is the latest in a series of papers produced by the Centre for Career & Personal Development and the first to be available on-line. It offers a collection of articles from presentations at the Centre's biennial conference which took place in May 2011 at the Salomons campus of the University.

We live in challenging times. Mindful of those challenges and the impact of spending cuts for many colleagues in the career education, development and guidance field in the UK; we wanted the conference, and this collection of papers, to be an opportunity for sharing both current purpose and future possibilities. Our aim is to pay attention to the core values of impartiality and listening to the client and their story – what we view as a return to our professional roots. Beyond this, we want to assert the place of beliefs, values, culture, biography and narrative: to give these concepts space in the foreground (rather than assigned to the background) of career decision-making. Why? Despite (or maybe because of) the haemorrhaging of talent in some sectors, it is essential that we retain, *but also develop* relevant career guidance interventions for the 21st century. It is all too easy for these core values to get lost in the call for 'realism' in an economic recession. Of course, with reduced and restricted opportunities clients, students and practitioners have to be resilient and need to review what they consider to be personally 'meaningful'. But supporting the development of resilience and reflexivity is different from encouraging a person to take *any* opportunity available. Knowing what is important to us; spending time reflecting on our beliefs and values can aid effective decision-making: it is not just 'wishful thinking' or dreaming. As Savickas states, 'Intentionality serves biographical construction in times of uncertainty. During transitions, individuals should engage in autobiographical reasoning to cope with change and risk' (2011:131).¹

All the presentations at the conference and the papers in this collection reflect our desire to understand better and do things differently. But – career education, development and guidance do not take place in a neutral context, economic policies rule the day. The first paper by **Tony Watts** places the value of professional career guidance within the context of other policy developments. In May 2011 Tony referred to the development of a national 'all age' career service, but stated that previous hopes had been replaced by fears that we may be seeing the most serious collapse of service provision in the last half-century. As Tony suggests at the end of his paper, 'finding spaces to work in, to develop the exciting ideas discussed at the May 2011 conference, will not be easy. It will require tenacity and creativity, probably – for the immediate future anyway – in local spaces rather than as part of a serious national strategy'.

The second paper by **Gideon Arulmani** moves us from local concerns to global understandings. Gideon calls for a broadening of paradigms in career counselling which traditionally have their origins in a western

¹ Savickas, M.L. (2011) *Career Counselling*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

epistemology. His paper discusses the necessity of developing a sharper sensitivity to the notion of cultural preparedness in order to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of a career counselling service. In the next paper, **Bill Law** questions what we mean by careers work, who wants it and who gives it? Bill signposts the possibilities for the kinds of professionalism we project, the locations we seek and the research we draw on. He also discusses the outcomes we offer through the materials, methods and partnerships we make.

In the fourth paper, **Liane Hambly** refers to the increasingly complex world within which people try to plan careers. Liane emphasises that practitioners need to incorporate 'new' approaches that help clients to navigate careers. She draws on research into the career decision-making of people who identify as having faith, discussing how prayer and meditation are important aspects with regard to action taken. **Hazel Reid and Jane Westergaard** also promote the need to integrate a range of theory into professional practice. They state that 'people develop their understanding of the social world in relationships with others. The meanings they take from those experiences shape their values, identity and the way they act within the world.' They discuss multiculturalism and transactional analysis as two counselling approaches that invite a reflexive response in relation to culturally sensitive careers work.

Next, returning to policy concerns and the creation of the National Careers Service in England, **Barbara Bassot and Barbara Shottin** explore the similarities and differences in the values and beliefs of practitioners working with clients of different ages. They ask – do practitioners' definitions of guidance vary depending on the age of the clients they are working with? What are the underpinning values and beliefs of guidance practitioners? And, would these values change in any way if they worked with a different client group? The following paper by **Alison Fielding** considers personal and professional boundaries, and the tensions which can arise for the practitioner when the personal and professional conflict. Alison draws on critical incident case studies to explore issues such as: remaining person-centred in a target-driven context, confidentiality, conflict with personal values, working with cultural difference (the practitioner *and* the client) and the risks and potential benefits of 'boundary crossing'.

In the next paper **Anne Chant** reminds us that the individualised and client-centred approach has served the needs of young people and professionals well, but, she asks, are we in danger of minimising the importance of the influence of parental and family influences? Should we be treating individuals as self sufficient, capable of purely individualised choices and self-efficacy? Anne explores the nature and potential of parental influence with reference to theoretical models and auto/biographical research; suggesting possible ways forward. **Johanna Oliver's** paper documents the initial findings from her auto/biographical study exploring collaborative working within service provision for children and young people. She writes that since the commencement of the coalition government and associated austerity-induced efficiency savings, the study has provided an opportunity to convey the stories of colleagues working in the non-statutory sector. These practitioners work with children and young people in a context where uncertainty is an expected normality.

The final paper by **Ian King** focuses on how to encourage older workers to determine future career direction by reflecting on their past vocational pathway. His research engaged professional practitioners (aged 50+) by asking them to co-construct their occupational story, drawing on their 're-membered' experiences. The paper positions occupational narrative as a vehicle for making meaningful career decisions in later working life.

Our quote on the programme and the 'front cover' of this occasional paper is by Theodore Roethke, 'Deep in their roots, all flowers keep the light'. In the current times that light may feel like a flickering candle in the darkness: but it burns still and the career education, development and guidance story will continue, develop further – and in new and exciting ways.

A.G. Watts 'Career guidance policy development under the Coalition Government: a critical analysis', pp 8-15

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Career guidance policy development under the Coalition Government: a critical analysis

A.G. Watts

Introduction

Policy development under the Coalition Government to date has been something of a roller-coaster. A speech last November to the Institute of Career Guidance Annual Conference in Belfast by John Hayes (the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning) (Hayes, 2010) was widely welcomed and gave grounds for hopes that, despite the public expenditure cuts, we might be about to see a major breakthrough in the development of careers services in England. Since then, however, these hopes have been replaced by fears that we may be seeing the most serious collapse of service provision in the last half-century.

How and why has this happened? In addressing this question, I will draw on a detailed analysis I have recently completed for Careers England of the wide range of statements made to date by Ministers and civil servants – in a variety of speeches in Parliament and elsewhere, in responses to Parliamentary Questions, and in correspondence (Watts, 2011b). I will also try to draw out some conclusions and briefly to indicate some ways forward.

Context

First, though, we need to go backwards, and remind ourselves briefly of the background to the situation when the Coalition Government came to power. As I have chronicled in previous contributions to this series (Watts, 2006; 2008; 2010a), the merging of the Careers Service into Connexions – as part of an attempt to address social exclusion and young people at risk – resulted in a significant erosion both of careers services to young people and of the professionalism of careers advisers (see also Lewin and Colley, 2011). At the same time, however, the skills debate, fostered significantly by the Leitch Review of Skills (2006), produced the development, for the first time, of a serious careers service for adults. The outcome was the exquisite but nonsensical paradox that whereas in the past we had a careers service for young people and an information, advice and guidance (IAG) framework for adults, we now have a careers service for adults alongside an IAG framework for young people (Watts, 2010a).

Towards the end of its time in power, the Labour Government belatedly acknowledged the errors of its ways. This was stimulated significantly by the Milburn Report, which pointed out the importance of career guidance for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and how the focus on social exclusion had resulted in the neglect of social mobility (Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009). The result was a flurry of activity, including the development of a new strategy for young people's IAG (DCSF, 2009) and the establishment of a Task Force on the Careers Profession. The very title of the Task Force seemed an apology for the professional erosion its earlier policies had caused.

Rationale and core principles

The Coalition Government has sustained the enhanced rhetorical concern for the policy importance of career guidance. The rationale seems to be two-fold. One is a continued interest in supporting social mobility, as evidenced in the prominent attention given to career guidance in the Government's Strategy for Social Mobility (HM Government, 2011). This is widely viewed as a distinctive Liberal Democrat contribution to the Coalition, but John Hayes – a Conservative – has also indicated it as a key motivation for his own commitment (Hayes, 2010).

The other rationale is the role of career guidance in moving towards a demand-led skills system. This was argued in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills strategy document, with its reference to wanting to 'turn the system on its head, so that it is those using the system, not the state, which drives the system'. On this view, the role of the state is to 'give them control over their funding and the support and information they need to make the right choices for the future' (DBIS, 2010:5). The same view drove the influential Browne Report on the funding of higher education, with its reference to wanting to 'put students at the heart of the system', so that 'their choices will shape the landscape of higher education'. Accordingly, the Browne Report recommended that 'every school will be required to make individualised careers advice available to its pupils', delivered 'by certified professionals' (Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, 2010:25, 28). In other words, career guidance is viewed as a market-maker: a means of making the learning 'market' (as well as the labour market) operate more effectively, by ensuring that the actors within it have the support they need to ensure that their decisions are well-informed and well-thought-through.

Based on these rationales, a number of core principles underpin the Government's emerging policies. The first is to establish an all-age careers service, as the 'centrepiece' of the reform programme (DBIS, 2010:42). This had been advocated by John Hayes and by the Conservative Party for some time (Hayes and Kelly, 2007; Conservative Party, 2008). Its title is to be the National Careers Service. Its stated objective is to build on the best of Next Step and Connexions (Hayes, 2010).

The second principle is to 'revitalise the professional status of career guidance', including the need to 'restore a focus on specialist expertise in careers guidance for young people' (Hayes, 2010). This includes a commitment to implement the recommendations of the Careers Profession Task Force (2010). In the wake of the Task Force report, the main professional associations in the careers field have formed themselves into a Careers Profession Alliance. John Hayes (2010) has indicated that he looks to the CPA to establish common professional standards and a code of ethics for careers professionals, leading possibly to a 'licence to practise', alongside organisational quality standards.

The third principle is to safeguard the partnership model in relation to careers provision for young people, in which schools work in partnership with external independent advisers. In support of this principle, John Hayes (2010) referred to the need for access to impartial advice independent of vested interests, and cited an Ofsted

(2010) report indicating that schools with their own sixth forms were not always sufficiently impartial about options at 16. He also indicated that schools were unlikely to be able to keep sufficiently up-to-date with the latest developments in careers and the labour market.

In all three of these respects, Government policies are closely in line with best international practice as indicated in international studies (Watts, 2011a). All three have been widely welcomed.

Complications

From this point, however, complications begin to set in. Their core source is the Government's commitment to school autonomy. Its view, set out in the Schools White Paper (DfE, 2010), is that school autonomy is at the heart of all high-performing education systems in relation to pupil attainment (as revealed in particular in the OECD's PISA studies). Accordingly, it believes that in order to raise standards, it needs to trust head teachers and their staff to make decisions in the interests of their pupils.

This principle is reflected in the Education Bill currently going through Parliament. The Bill includes a new statutory duty for schools to 'secure that all registered pupils at the school are provided with independent careers guidance during the relevant phase of their education'. This statement is clarified in the accompanying 'explanatory notes' as referring to 14-16, though the Government has subsequently indicated that it will consult on whether this should be extended to 18 (as it obviously should) and possibly downwards to Year 8. The Bill does not apply to academies, but Ministers have indicated that they plan to extend the duty to academies through their funding agreements.

At the same time, however, the Government has indicated that schools should be able to choose their own provider rather than having to work with the National Careers Service. This effectively undermines the partnership model by converting the relationship into one of contractor and supplier. The school is to determine what is contracted out, and to whom. Yet the schools that are being trusted to make these decisions are the very schools whose 'vested interests' have been identified as part of the rationale for the partnership model that is now being abandoned. It is also noteworthy that, in relation to the international evidence cited by the Government as the justification for such school autonomy, a review of such evidence indicates that there is no common pattern which characterises the career guidance provision in highly performing education systems; and that in the two countries which have abandoned the partnership model in favour of school commissioning (Netherlands and New Zealand), this resulted in significant reductions in the extent and quality of career guidance provision (Watts, 2011a).

At least, however, the Education Bill appeared to insist that schools will not be able to appoint their own careers adviser. But now the DfE has indicated explicitly that this is not the case. The wording of this part of the communication to schools which it issued in April 2011 (DfE, 2011) is worth quoting in full:

Those schools that have already developed their own arrangements for providing impartial careers advice and guidance – for example, by employing their own careers adviser – may continue to do so. However, in such cases a school must also ensure pupils have access to a source of guidance which is independent and external to the school. This might include web-based or telephone services, and/or face-to-face guidance from a specialist provider.

This would seem to undermine the declared purpose of this section of the Bill. Moreover, the use of the words 'might' and 'and/or' in the final sentence suggests that schools could fulfil this duty, at a minimum,

by providing 'access to online resources'. Since it is difficult to see how such access could be denied, such an interpretation would seem to render the formal duty meaningless. All of these confusions and contradictions reflect unconvincing attempts to resolve the fundamental tensions between the original BIS vision for the all-age service and DfE policies relating to school autonomy.

On top of all this, the Government is proposing through the Bill to repeal the current statutory duty for schools to provide careers education to pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. Although the communication to schools states that this 'does not imply that these activities are unimportant' (DfE, 2011), the double negative is hardly a strong affirmation. In addition, it seems that the focus now is not on a 'curriculum' but on a range of 'information and activities': the Strategy for Social Mobility refers to career guidance being complemented and enhanced by, for example, "'taster" sessions; open evenings and "next step" events; past students coming in to schools to talk about their experiences; employers visiting to talk about their jobs; and mentoring opportunities' (HM Government, 2011:40). It is also worth noting that the future of work experience at 14-16 is threatened by the attack on it in the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011) and by the recent removal of funding for Education Business Partnerships (EBPs).

In relation to all this, there are strong grounds for doubting whether schools of their own accord will give much priority to careers education and guidance. Some will, because their senior management teams view it as an important part of good education, and as contributing to pupil motivation and attainment. But others will not, because they take a narrower view of their role and purpose, and see careers work as a diversion. The consistent message of international studies is that school-based guidance systems tend to have weak links to the labour market, to view educational choices as ends in themselves rather than as career choices (which they are), to lack impartiality, and to be uneven in extent and quality (OECD, 2004). Whatever the arguments may be for school autonomy in relation to pupil attainment, they do not hold true in relation to careers provision.

This appears likely to be particularly the case here, because the policy levers are weak. Much emphasis is being placed by Ministers on the proposed destinations measure, under which schools will be required to indicate how many continue in education, training or employment. This is however a crude measure, influenced by a wide range of factors outside the quality of guidance programmes. School inspections, too, are likely to be a weak lever, particularly as Ministers have indicated that they would only expect Ofsted to look at this area if there was evidence of weakness – without any indication of how such evidence is to be gathered. It seems that the recommendation of the Careers Profession Task Force (2010) to develop an overarching national kite mark to validate the different existing CEIAG quality awards will be implemented by Careers England, but no specific support for this has yet come from the Government, and such a kite mark would not affect the voluntary status of such awards.

Funding and transition arrangements

Alongside these changes, the funding base for existing careers services for young people seems at risk of being allowed to vanish. The assumption had been that the funding for the new all-age National Careers Service would be based on merging the Connexions and Next Step budgets. The Next Step budget currently amounts to around £83m, and DBIS has announced that a comparable figure has been committed for 2012/13. This is however dwarfed by the notional budget for the career guidance element of Connexions, which is currently estimated as being £203m, including £7m for Connexions Direct. It is important to note that this is already substantially less than the old Careers Service budget, which was over £300m at current rates (Watts, 2011b). But a DfE announcement about its funding contribution to the all-age service has been conspicuous by its

absence. Fears are growing that it may be confined largely or wholly to the Connexions Direct element of £7m.

If it is the case that the direct DfE contribution to the all-age service is to be confined to web-based and telephone-based services, then any face-to-face career guidance services for young people will be dependent on what schools are prepared to pay for. This also applies to staff and programme development support previously available from Connexions or Local Authorities, and other external services that have had their funding withdrawn, including EBPs and AimHigher. Yet there has been no discernible transfer of funding for such services to schools. And many schools are anticipating significant reductions in their overall budgets. So they are being expected, from these reduced budgets, to pay for core career guidance services which they have previously received free of charge. The extent of the resources at the disposal of the all-age service for providing such services will presumably be dependent on the extent to which schools are willing to purchase them, and to do so from the all-age service rather than other providers.

A serious transition plan for the new arrangements would have involved a three-stage process, transparent to all from the outset:

- Ensuring that Local Authorities kept services in place during the initial stage
- Transferring the Connexions career guidance funding to the all-age service for an interim stage, in order to maintain continuity of services while the work on quality standards and other arrangements was being developed and completed
- Notifying schools that the bulk of this funding would subsequently be transferred into their budgets in order to enable them thenceforth to purchase the services.

None of this has been evident. Indeed, many Local Authorities have already announced major reductions and even closures of their Connexions services, including massive staff redundancies. Since Local Authorities are not in future to retain responsibility for career guidance services, and in the absence of any clarity about the extent and nature of the all-age service into which these services are supposedly to be merged, such services have in some cases been particularly hard hit. A reminder to Local Authorities of their continuing statutory responsibilities to provide such services in the meantime was only published in April 2011, by which time much of the damage had already been done.

The reality seems to be, therefore, that the existing notional funding for face-to-face career guidance services for young people under Connexions has not just been pruned in line with general cuts in public expenditure, but is being allowed to disappear altogether – without any public announcement to this effect. This at a time when the challenges facing young people are being exacerbated by rising youth unemployment and by changes in higher education funding, and from a Government which claims to believe in the importance of career guidance.

Implications for the all-age service

Moreover, it seems likely that this will affect the services for adults too. At least civil servants have confirmed that money from the BIS budget cannot be used to pay for areas that BIS is not responsible for, such as career guidance for young people. But some current Next Step arrangements are built significantly upon the foundations of services for young people through Connexions: where these are eroded or destroyed, this could seriously affect the future services which will be available for adults as well.

Meanwhile, no information is yet available about the structure of the new all-age service. The current Next Step careers service for adults comprises regional contracts with 'prime contractors' for face-to-face services (each of which sub-contracts elements of service delivery to additional providers), plus one national contract for the telephone helpline. Is this model to continue? If not, what? BIS has indicated that the network of organisations it funds as part of the all-age service will be able to offer services on the open market to individuals or organisations that are willing to pay. What will the relationship be between these various contracting processes, with their differing and potentially conflicting contractor-supplier relationships? What will the transaction costs be? What will be the level of integration of service delivery, both across the youth/adults divide and across the different channels of service delivery? How can an integrated customer management system be implemented within such a complex and diffuse structure?

Linked to this are questions about the status of the National Careers Service. To what extent is it to be a strategic body, and to what extent a mere collection of competitors within a market? The other leading all-age careers services in the world – in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales – are clearly strategic bodies, effectively providing a strong professional spine for a lifelong career guidance system, and paying significant attention to supporting the development of career support capacity in educational institutions, in workplaces and in the wider community (Watts, 2010b). Will the all-age service in England have a similar strategic and capacity-building role? Or will its providers simply be encouraged to build their own service-delivery 'businesses'? If the latter, how does this relate to the notion that high-quality career guidance is a key market-maker in relation to the learning and labour markets: does it make sense to marketise the market-maker in this extreme way?

Conclusions

If the main elements of the Government's policies are to be implemented as planned, in a way that improves rather than damages services, there are a number of steps that need to be taken. In particular:

- The architecture and funding for the new all-age NCS service need to be announced
- The organisational and professional standards have to be developed and implemented both for the NCS and for all providers secured by schools
- The all-age NCS has to be designed, tendered and contracted
- The basis for any local contestability has to be determined (including the issue of how any 'competitors' to the NCS are to relate to it)
- Schools have to be persuaded to pay for services which they have previously received free of charge (with clarification of what schools are now expected to buy).

There are severe doubts about whether these steps are achievable within the timetable Ministers have set (for young people and adults to be able to begin accessing the new arrangements from September 2011, with the all-age service being fully operational by April 2012, and the new statutory duty for schools coming into effect from September 2012). There are also concerns that:

- By the time the new market is established, much of the expertise for its professional base will have disappeared
- In the meantime, there will have been a widespread collapse of careers help for young people

- The original BIS vision for the all-age service will have been fatally eroded by lack of serious engagement from DfE, with adverse impact on the services for adults too.

It is deeply ironic that all this has occurred under a Government which espouses the importance of career guidance and which had raised such high hopes. There are various explanations of how and why it has happened. Probably the most convincing is that the original plans were owned by John Hayes and by BIS but not by DfE, and have foundered as they confronted the intransigence of DfE Ministers with their commitment to school autonomy. But this does not explain the refusal to admit to the likely destruction of the budget for careers services for young people, by a Government which claims the virtues of transparency. This is open to the serious charge of collective hypocrisy.

The other serious charge is that of collective incompetence. On the last occasion the Conservative Party was in power, in the 1990s, it marketised the Careers Service. This was controversial, but the transition was well-managed, in ways which minimised the risks and maximised the potential benefits. As a result, it had more positive effects than many had anticipated. This time, however, the delays and confusions have exacerbated the tensions and conflicts built into the model. There has been no coherent plan of how to achieve the Government's espoused goals. The result, I fear, is that the erosion of careers services in England, which started under the subsequent Labour Government, will now be completed by the other two major parties – all less by design than by default, based on ill-considered subordination to other policies.

Not all of this is yet set in stone. There is still room for lobbying as the Bill goes through Parliament, which could enable some ground to be reclaimed. Moreover, there is an opportunity to establish a serious careers profession for the future, as well as the infrastructure for an all-age service which could provide a base for future development. A stronger market could produce innovation as well as fragmentation. The work will continue. But finding spaces to work in, to develop the exciting ideas discussed at the May 2011 conference, will not be easy. It will require tenacity and creativity, probably – for the immediate future anyway – in local spaces rather than as part of a serious national strategy.

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Gideon Arulmani 'Receive in order to give: Eastern cultural values and their relevance to contemporary career counselling contexts', pp 16-22

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Receive in order to give: Eastern cultural values and their relevance to contemporary career counselling contexts

Gideon Arulmani

Introduction

A young Indian girl, living in Australia was brought to see me when she was on vacation in India. I was told I was the 'last resort' since the girl was blindly rebelling against all advice. Perched irritably on the edge of her chair she said to me: "I am so confused...my career counsellor in Melbourne told me I would do well in the humanities. I was happy! Because I love history. But my dad... he was shocked. He said the career counsellor was *pagal* (mad)! He wants me to be an engineer. My mum... She wants me to be a doctor (she wanted to be one but couldn't). And now... my grandparents are saying Australia has spoiled me. Made me too western. Girls are supposed to study, get a degree, marry and have children you see. And now I've been brought to you. What are *you* going to say? To whom am I to listen? You're all driving me nuts."

I begin with this quotation to highlight two related themes that have implications for career counselling today: that counselling contexts are becoming increasingly multicultural and that numerous, often contradictory, social and cultural mediated forces influence the career decision making process. The careers advice this young woman received from her Australian counsellor was perhaps perfectly acceptable in the Australian context. However within her family, as with most Indian families, studying the humanities is believed to be an indication that one failed to get into the more prestigious science oriented courses. The interplay between gender and career choice is also very clear in her statement. At a deeper level, the influence of her parents' desires and the expectations of her community, accentuate her confusion. Cultures prepare individuals to engage with life in different ways. This article discusses the necessity of developing a sharper sensitivity to the notion of cultural preparedness in order to sharpen the relevance and effectiveness of a career counselling service.

Customary maybe contrary

Contradictory situations such as the one reported above, with several factors influencing the process of

decision making, are becoming more and more common. Most methods of guidance and counselling emerged in an environment wherein the counsellor and counselee belonged to a similar cultural background. Hence conditions could be created for a particular approach to counselling that were necessary and sufficient for that context. The crucial point to consider is that the same conditions may be neither necessary nor sufficient for a people from a different cultural heritage. An individualistically oriented counselling paradigm that places the individual and his or her desires at centre stage for example, may not be effective with a collectivistic client group whose culture has prepared them to lay a strong value on others' opinions and their group's wellbeing. Geographic borders are more porous today than ever before and it is common that counsellor and counselee come from differing cultural backgrounds, each motivated and inspired by their own beliefs and inclinations toward work and career. Indeed what is customary in one context may be experienced as contrary in another context. Studies that have examined the impact and outcome of educational initiatives have found that interventions that are based on worldviews that are dissimilar to the worldview of the group that the intervention is intended to serve, have poor community participation which affects sustainability and programme effectiveness (Reese and Vera, 2007). The applicability of an intervention is often poor when 'universal' principles are applied without considering the ways in which they need to be adapted to the 'particular' characteristics of a specific setting (Griffin and Miller, 2007). Furthermore, the need for career guidance is rapidly strengthening in non-Western contexts (Arulmani, 2010). At the same time the fact remains that the developing world has been poorly represented in the international literature. The need for models and methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to the culture and economies of these countries is urgent. This calls for a broadening of paradigms in counselling which traditionally have had their origins in a Western epistemology. Over the years, the forces of colonisation and globalisation have interfered with prevailing ways of life and discredited the precepts of local cultures. As a result, age old practices, skills and knowledge bases are discarded in today's circumstances as being irrational and unreasonable (Bissel, 2010). Given below are two illustrations.

Macaulay's Minute – 1835

The following is drawn from Young (1935) and Thirumalai's (2002) description of the creation of the English Education Act, a legislative Act of the Council of India passed in 1835. Thomas Babington Macaulay (Lord Macaulay) arrived in India as a member of the Supreme Council of India. His sojourn lasted barely four years, but his impact on the educational philosophy of India and thereby orientations to career preparation was so profound that its effects are felt even today. He was staunchly patriotic and very soon developed intense dislike for Indian culture, languages, arts, sciences, and theology. He was however, entirely well intentioned and says '...it will be the proudest day in English history, to have found a great people sunk in the lowest depths of slavery and superstition, to have so ruled them as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens, would indeed be a title to glory all our own' (Young, 1935:125). His famous minute presented to the Governor General says, '...the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are...so poor and rude that, the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language, not vernacular amongst them' (Young, 1935: 203). His comment on a literature upheld by a way of life that is thousands of years old was, '...I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works...I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.' In effect, well intentioned though he was, Macaulay portrayed the method and language of education for which Indians were culturally prepared as being less valuable. These views were accepted and transformed into policy when Governor General William Bentinck's stated: 'I give my entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in this Minute' (Young, 1935: 403). With this, indigenous forms of education and ancient Indian languages were placed, at best, at a lower level of priority.

Sithaladevi: The goddess of Small Pox

My second illustration draws upon Dharampal's (1971), documentation of the loss of indigenous technologies, methods, devices and procedures that were practised in India with great effectiveness for hundreds of years.

The practice of inoculation against small pox was known in India as early as A.D.1800. In Bengal (Eastern India) inoculation was performed by a particular sect of Brahmins, delegated annually for this service. Dividing themselves into small parties of three or four each, they planned their travelling circuits so as to arrive at their respective destinations some weeks before the usual return of the disease. In addition, small pox was linked to a special goddess: Sitala. She was portrayed with a terrifying visage, oozing fulminating pustules, rotting flesh and carrying a disfigured face, in the late stages of infection. The belief was actively promoted that the evidence of sitalika (pustules) was evidence of being 'possessed' by the terrible Sitala. The treatment prescribed is fascinating. A Brahmin, possessed of faith, would recite the hymn of Sitala Devi in the presence of the sitalika (pustules); while chanting he would select a spot on the outside of the arm, rub it vigorously with a dry cloth for 8 to 10 minutes, make 15 to 16 minute incisions with a steel tool sterilised in a sacred fire, place a small wad of cotton saturated with matter from the pustules of the preceding year, moistened with Ganga (holy) water, on the wound and ensure it remained in contact with the wound for several hours. This was the disease management method prescribed nearly 200 years ago! Remarkably comparable to modern forms of inoculation! Except that, all through the procedure the inoculator continuously recited the worship of the Small Pox Goddess. This practice represents the blending of religion with daily life; naturalistic (scientific) facts were presented within the garb of religion. Religious interpretations placed upon this disease did not exclude naturalistic comprehension. Reverence of Sitala did not require people to reject such scientific facts. In fact it facilitated a complete and whole-hearted acceptance of the entire procedure. This is how this group was culturally prepared to combat this virulent disease. British rule in India also led to the control of Indian life and society. Shocked by such 'barbaric practices', this form of treatment was banned. People were dissuaded from resorting to it. Gradually, this time honoured, highly successful, community based medical practice crumbled and decayed. This traditional, culturally sanctioned form of inoculation was replaced by other Western methods. Of course these methods were as effective. But they were unfamiliar to the people, who were suspicious and did not comply unless forced. As a result, for the first time in centuries, people were left unprotected against small pox. Not surprisingly thereafter, Bengal, for the first time, experienced multiple small pox epidemics of devastating proportions.

History is replete with such examples, not only from India, but from around the world. It is not my purpose in citing these examples, to denigrate the efforts of those who ruled India. There is no doubt at all, that Lord Macaulay and British doctors did want British subjects in India to gain from Britain's offerings. It is what lies behind that good intention that I draw to the reader's attention: the lack of sensitivity to methods, systems and culturally embedded ways of living, fuelled, dare I say, by a misplaced conviction in the superiority of one's own methods and ideas. These examples are nearly two centuries old. Yet, the underlying principle is relevant to this day. Counsellors today are highly likely to meet clients who are from entirely different persuasions. Effectiveness of outcomes is not achieved merely by 'respecting' others' points of view. It rests also upon the willingness to take a giant step further forward to facilitate a reciprocity of learning between the counsellor and the counselee. It is here perhaps, the notion of cultural preparedness could have relevance to planning and developing career counselling programmes that have a strong link with the client's felt needs.

The cultural preparedness approach

A culture prepares its members to engage with life in a particular manner. The learning that occurs between

an individual and his or her culture is not only the result of interactions with present members of that culture. It is drawn from a deep repository of experience that has accumulated and grown over the ages. Each of us has been immersed in a conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions, and notions that coalesce and shape our engagement with life. Prevailing cultural practices tend to create an environment of attitudes and beliefs which we have referred to as social cognitive environments (Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani, 2004). They could be in relation to marriage, childrearing, sexuality, food habits, gender relations, or any other aspect of a given group's engagement with its surroundings. It is crucial to note that the nature of this engagement could vary from one group to another. The cultural preparedness approach points out that career development occurs under the influence of a wide range of factors. Family and parents, social practices, religious persuasion, economic climate, political orientations, all come together to create a certain environment within which attitudes and opinions are formed about work, occupation and career. The effectiveness of an intervention could be higher when the ideas and concepts that lie behind an intervention cohere with the history, values and beliefs of a particular community.

Indian philosophy and career development

Ancient Indian culture described constructs that have direct relevance to work, occupation and career. I will now describe a few of these practices to illustrate the notion of cultural preparedness.

Religion and spirituality:

Sculpture, painting, poetry, architecture, dance – almost all aspect of Indian art and literature have spirituality as their central theme. Day to day life too is coloured by religion, as are orientations to work and career. Inextricably woven into the Indian way of life the sacred is seen in the secular. Hence it is not unusual for a person who has his or her roots in this culture to first turn to culturally-endorsed representatives of religion and spirituality before turning to a secular counsellor for advice and guidance. Furthermore, individuals from this background are used to being directed and being 'given' the answers to their questions. In a career counselling interaction, a family would expect to be 'told' which career would suit their child the best. Being directive and advice-oriented would not be considered inappropriate. It would in fact be expected.

Dharma: The code of responsibility:

Dharma which means 'right living' is a primary value which describes an engagement with life that is always reciprocally supportive, sustaining rather than exploitative, giving and at the same time receiving. This worldview espouses a quality of human interactions that is characterised both by separateness as well as interdependence. Work therefore is understood as a duty and a contribution.

Samsara and karma:

Samsara is a philosophic construct that describes an individual's existence as spanning lifetimes, beginning, developing, ending, and beginning once again. *Karma Yoga* is a doctrine that qualifies the notion of samsara. At the heart of this principle is the exhortation that the person must be engaged with life in totality but without attachment and selfishness. Samsara and karma describe existence and development to be cyclical rather than linear. Development is not conceived as unidirectional, progressing from a start to a terminal point. Instead, development is seen as a constantly regenerating cycle that builds upon earlier development (Arulmani, 2011). It is a superficial interpretation that leads to an understanding of karma and samsara as being fatalistic and deterministic. In effect, karma and samsara urge action and uphold the self-mediation

of circumstances. 'Effort' is celebrated and the individual is encouraged to shape the future through actions executed thoughtfully and wilfully in the present (Arulmani, 2011).

Ashramas:

The ancient Indian ashrama system describes life's purpose to play out in stages. Materialism is encouraged during the early stages of one's life. Personal gain and the creation of wealth through energetic engagement with work is required during these stages. Interestingly, the latter stages of life are described differently. One is not expected to retire and stop working. Instead, vigorous engagement with work continues. But the object of work is different. As one matures the purpose of one's work is to serve the community without motivations of personal gain. Indian approaches, therefore, are not merely 'other-worldly'. Nor do they describe work as drudgery. They encourage energetic engagement with the world of work and with maturity the purpose of work gradually transforms into an act of service to others.

An important point that emerges from the foregoing discussion is that work and occupation are understood to be an integral aspect of one's life. These principles are believed to have divine origins and guide day-to-day living. An individual who is a part of this culture has been prepared to view work as an extension of one's life. However, for the reasons described at the beginning of this writing, these values have been eroded and the purpose and meaning of work and career have been obscured. Over the recent past, there has been increasing interest in incorporating indigenous constructs and concepts into counselling and reports indicate that such approaches have highly positive outcomes (e.g., Kakar, 2003). Our field experience also has demonstrated that career guidance interventions are more sustainable when they fit in with culturally endorsed images and beliefs about career development (e.g., Arulmani and Abdulla, 2007). With a view to developing an approach to career guidance that is culture-resonant and at the same time relevant to the present-day context, we interpreted established Indian cultural principles into a career guidance programme. As an illustration of applying the cultural preparedness framework, the final section of this paper describes the Jiva approach to guidance and counselling which is based upon the cultural constructs described above.

The *Jiva* Approach to guidance and counselling

As discussed above, the original Indian understanding weaves life and work closely together. Hence our approach was named 'Jiva', which means 'life' in almost all Indian languages. The Jiva method of guidance and counselling is based on a set of principles the salient features of which are described below.

Principle 1. Career as a Spiral: A Nonlinear Approach to Career Development

This Jiva principle draws upon the cultural construct of samsara which symbolises the circularity of life. Common experience tells us that a career hardly ever develops in a linear and sequential manner, moving smoothly from one success to another. In reality, new possibilities open, paths diverge and expectations may need modification. Using the image of the spiral, Jiva describes the individual's engagement with work as a continuous elaboration and construction, characterised by adaptation, discovery and renewal (Arulmani, 2011). Young people participating in the Jiva programme learn that progress may not always point in the 'forward' direction. In fact healthy development may require one to return to earlier learnings, let go of previous positions and begin afresh.

Principle 2. Dispassionate Decision-Making: Assess Before You Accept

Economic development today is such that jobs migrate from one labour market to another, leading to the unprecedented materialization of new occupational prospects in some economies. In such contexts career choosers rush to grasp opportunities, making decisions based upon a 'high salary' rather than personal fulfilment. With the passage of time, as wage bills increase, jobs migrate once again to locations where labour is cheaper. The commitment to a job with a high salary turns out to be merely a chimera. Jiva uses the karmic concept of *nishkama* which exhorts the individual to practice dispassion in the face of emotional arousal. The objective of career guidance would be to help individuals exercise restraint and shape the future through actions executed thoughtfully and wilfully in the present. Effective career guidance therefore would include helping the individual weigh up advantages and disadvantages and *then* accept or more importantly learn to say no to what merely appears to be a 'good' opportunity.

Principle 3. Sensitivity to the 'Other': Practicing a Sustainable Career

Environmental degradation is an issue that is related to the manner in which we practice our careers. Inclusion of ideas into career guidance, related to practicing sustainable careers is urgently required. Sensitivity to the 'other' is a deeply cherished Indian custom that emerges from the concepts of dharma and ashrama. Jiva draws upon this ancient attitude to life and points the career chooser to ponder over the consequences of his/her engagement with work. The inclusion of the notion of dharma highlights a career guidance principle wherein the pursuit of career goals would buttress rather than degrade the environment in which the career is practiced.

Principle 4. The Changing and the Unchanged: Coping with Unpredictability

The last decade's dramatic changes in the world of work and the labour market have brought a vital fact to the fore: today's career chooser must develop the skills to deal with uncertainty and unpredictability. Going back to the concept of Dharma, we see a description of the cosmos as a paradox wherein change and permanence coexist. Indian philosophy points out that while the form may change, the core remains the same. This Jiva principle focuses on helping the career chooser find the balance between aspects of self that change and aspects that are comparatively more firm and constant. External influences for example are likely to change personal interests. On the other hand aptitudes are relatively more stable. Jiva points out that while jobs are tied to the ups and downs of labour market cycles, a career, composed as it is of a family of jobs, is more likely to remain in demand.

The Jiva Logo which appears at the beginning of this article, has been created with the intention of presenting these principles in graphic form. Principle 1 is reflected in the spiral, the tick mark represents Principle 2, the colours of the logo, green and blue, tie in with Principle 3 and the unfinished circle demonstrates Principle 4.

Conclusion

I return to the concept of the ashrama to draw this writing to a close. While the ashrama system articulates the roles and duties of the individual, it also underlines the consideration to be focused upon the individual by the larger community. It is within this ongoing process of 'giving' and 'receiving' that a career has its being. This principle also has relevance to the career guidance professional. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the settings in which counselling must be delivered are becoming increasingly multicultural. The ideas,

values and motivations of counsellor and client might vary quite dramatically. The effectiveness of a counselling interaction could be much enhanced if the counsellor creates an environment wherein the interaction is a teaching-learning experience both for the client *and* for the counsellor. At the deepest level, this is an attitude. An attitude that allows the counsellor to also be a learner. An attitude that allows the counsellor to receive in order to give.

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3

Bill Law 'Philosophies for careers work – what do we mean by "careers work"? and, anyway, who are "we"?', pp 23-32

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Philosophies for careers work – what do we mean by 'careers work'? and, anyway, who are 'we'?

Bill Law

This is designed to take you out of your comfort zone. It's about the assumptions that underlay what we say and do about careers work. They're often unspoken, some are deep-laid. The deep-laid can emerge when the 'why?' question is repeatedly asked:

'I see that, but why?...', '...ok, but why do you keep on about it?...', '...it may be important to you, but why would it be important to me...?'

Children enjoy their versions of repeated-why questioning. But, as comfortable assumptions settle into place, we can lose interest in it.

And we need it, especially when we're trying to position ourselves in the minds of other people. Examples of the need to do that are writing a funding proposal, drafting an essay or article, and putting a job application together. We choose our words carefully, and self-interrogation helps us with that...

'...why do I believe that this is such a good idea?...'

This material examines that process. At the most probing levels it takes us to where we can declare a philosophy of careers work – we know what is necessary, well-founded and valuable. Being able to say it – not just what we believe, but why we believe it, and why it has value – is at the heart of any professionalism.

However, there is always more than one philosophical position to take – they are here called orientations. Other people pick up the orientation to issues that are important to them. And different groups do that on different bases. A parallel article (Law, 2011) illustrates how that is so. Some of what we say works well for business people – they notice talk of 'employability' and 'skills'. Some reflects policy priorities – 'economy' and 'choice' get an approving nod. There is also talk of personal-and-social interests – winning murmurs of

approval for 'narrative' and 'community'.

There are other orientations, and much overlap between them. But, however comprised, they declare who we are. And that statement can attract or repel – it can also provoke hostility. Everything is approved by some and contested by others. We need to know more about why that is so. This material will help you to...

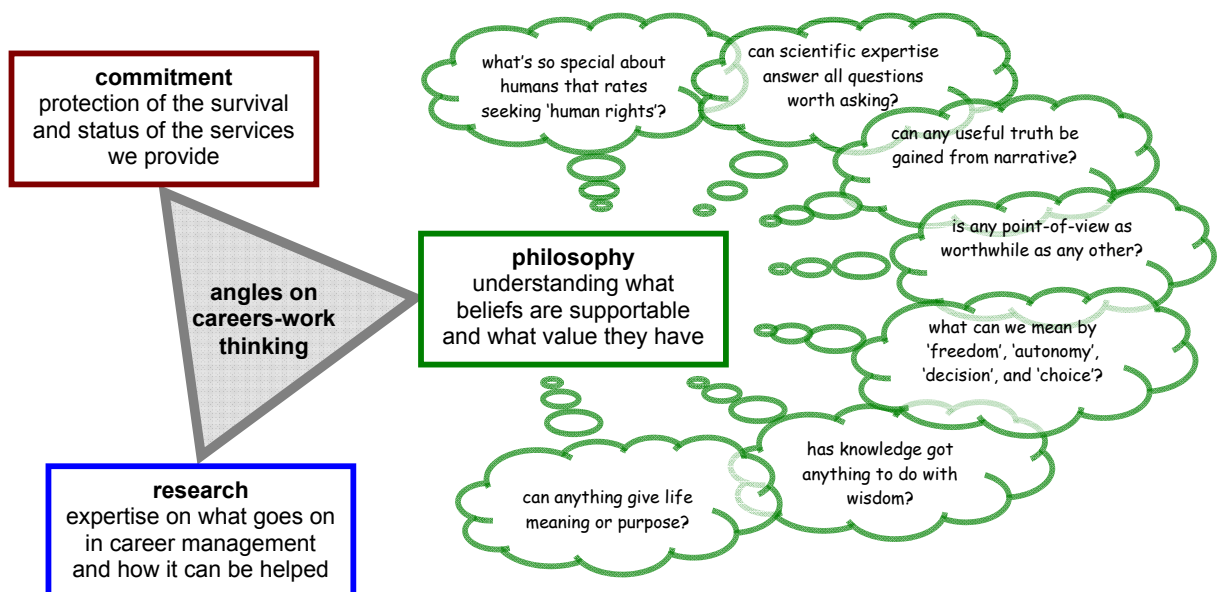
- probe underlying careers-work orientations
- appreciate how they are received by others
- face-up to contested ideas
- sharpen a self-critical professionalism
- expand the scope of thinking-and-action.

Angles on careers-work thinking

That kind of probing, sharpening and expanding is critical in a changing world, because it equips us for the kind of flexibility which is critical to reform, inventive and creative. That is not compliant, but principled flexibility – it doesn't lose sight of who it is.

But there is more going on in our positioning than can be voiced through philosophical orientations. Below is a triangulation of ways of saying why people might be justified in counting on us. Philosophy takes only one of the three angles.

Much of philosophy speaks of the possibility of knowing truths, rights, and beliefs. Some of this questioning is illustrated on the right below. It addresses issues at the heart of careers work. To probe each question, by repeatedly asking 'why?', is to find that philosophy challenges what the other angles claim – it sometimes undermines them. Philosophy is good at doing that – that's why we need it.



Do you need what you can find here?

The triangulation shows that we can make our claims on the basis of (1) a commitment to defend the colleagues we value, the organisations we belong to, and the actions we take. We can also do it on the basis of (2) the science we gather, the research we undertake, and the expertise we nurture. But the 2011 article shows how such claims go down less well with other people than they do with us. They are contested...

‘...why would you expect us to take this commitment so seriously?...’

‘...or, for that matter, what you call your expertise?...’

We need, then, to base our claims on (3) a probing of how well-founded, defensible and worthwhile any claim can be. This is philosophy – it is base-line thinking. It will do more than help you write a better proposal, article or cv – it puts us all in a position to talk with...

- **students and clients** - about why we are important to them
- **working partners** - about why we are worth their commitment
- **stakeholders** - about why we support their interests.

What to find here

This material is based on an interactive diagnosis of professional attitudes – at <http://www.hihohiho.com>

For the time being it is in pdf format – you can make it interactive by printing the next three pages. It will go into on-line interaction at a later stage in development.

The next three pages:- are where you probe for underlying philosophical orientations. They are...

- first: **responding** - underline key words for an aspect of your own work
- then: **locating** - see where that belongs in a cycle of possible orientations
- and then: **displaying** - show how that maps out in a spider-gram

Next page: - an account of what your spider-gram shows, and what that can mean for the way you do your work

Following two pages: - an example of how the ‘locating’ and ‘displaying’ pages might be used

Last page: - a list of the publications which inform this thinking.

People have been known to see things in a new light as a result of doing this.

You don't have to be stuck with your first thoughts – you can reprint the next three pages to re-position your thinking.

locating a careers-work cycle of orientations

find the key words reflecting your orientations?

- > transfer your underlining from the previous page to this page
- > total the underlining for each sector - in its box

where there is double or triple underlining count two or three

where they are on a boundary count them on one or both sides

down-to-earth
total:

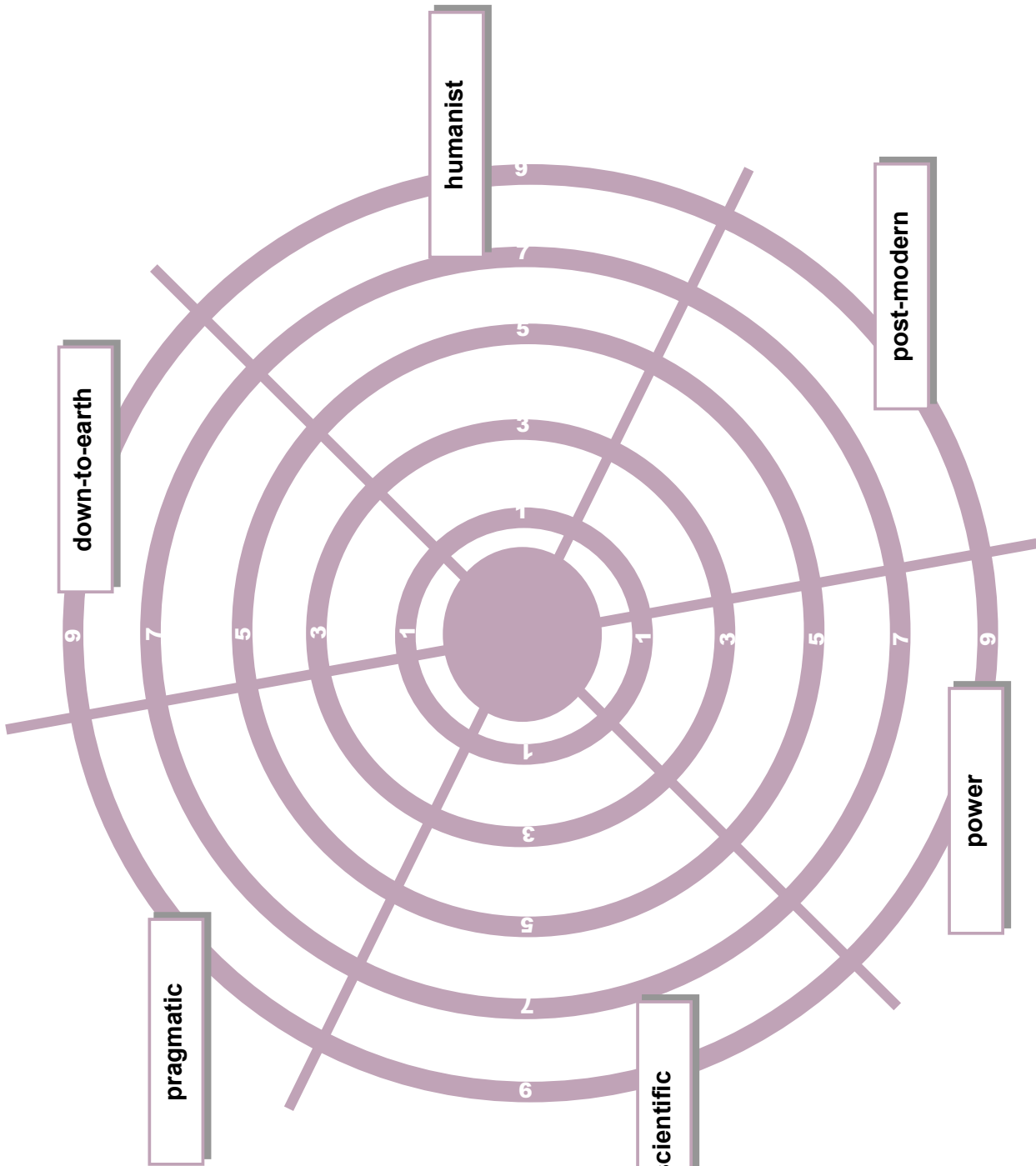
pragmatic
total:

scientific
total:

power
total:

humanist
total:

post-modern
total:



displaying possibly contending in a philosophical cycle

the spider-gram maps contrasting orientations - which may also be contested

> from the centre, shade out each segment - to where your responses reach

least support is at the centre, most support is at the rim

worked example on next-but-one pages

what task do you have in mind for this position

Issues, meanings and orientations

The 2011 article argues that the future of careers work depends on how we deal with four issues...

- for credibility - are we trusted?
- for expertise - are we sufficiently well trained?
- for connectedness - are we in touch with the realities?
- for independence - are we free of arbitrary influence?

The article shows how each of these issues is contested – differently-constituted groups favouring differently-argued responses, to differently-conceived situations.

The philosophical orientations underpinning those voices are illustrated on the right. Each differently assembles the language used in one of the segments on the ‘locating’ page (above). They construct the sorts of sentences that might appear in a proposal, an article or a job-application. The 2011 paper suggests how they can be rewritten for conversations we need to have with our students and clients, our partners in this work, and the stakeholders who have an interest in it.

The table below signposts some of the features that attract and repel these various audiences.

| | |
|---------------|--|
| human | strong on well-being <i>but</i> can get romanticised |
| scientific | evidence-based <i>but</i> can miss what methodology can't detect |
| post-modern | up-to-date <i>but</i> can lose touch with collective memory |
| pragmatic | useful <i>but</i> can be more impressed by impact than value |
| powerful | speaks truth to power <i>but</i> can overestimate the capability of policy |
| down-to-earth | credible <i>but</i> can reduce to the simplistic |

humanist ...bringing **entitlement** to people's **individually narrated** accounts of a **journey** towards the realisation of each their own **dream-job**...

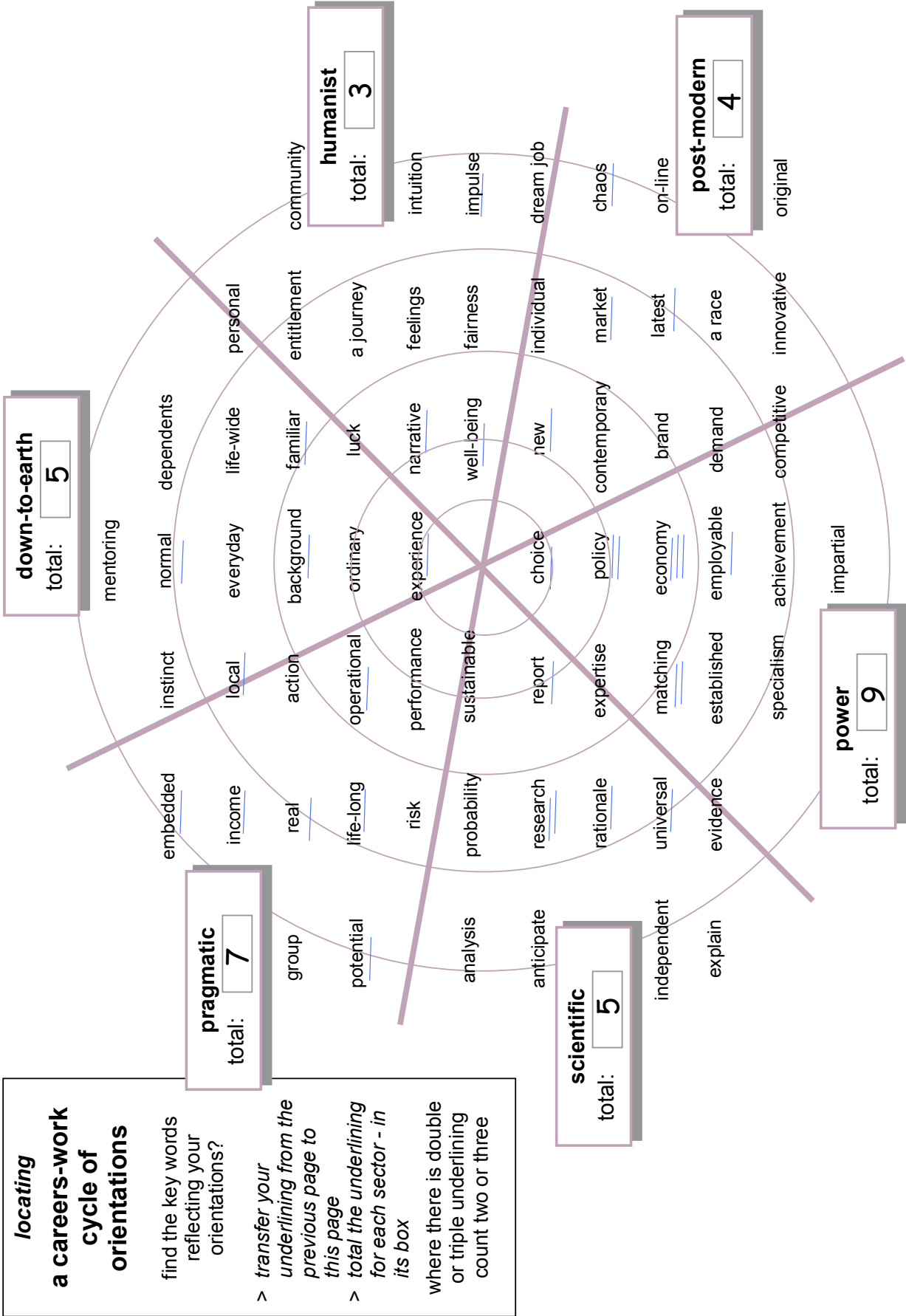
scientific ...**independently** researched and **evidence-base**, bringing a clear **rationale** for **expert** implementation and **universal** applicability...

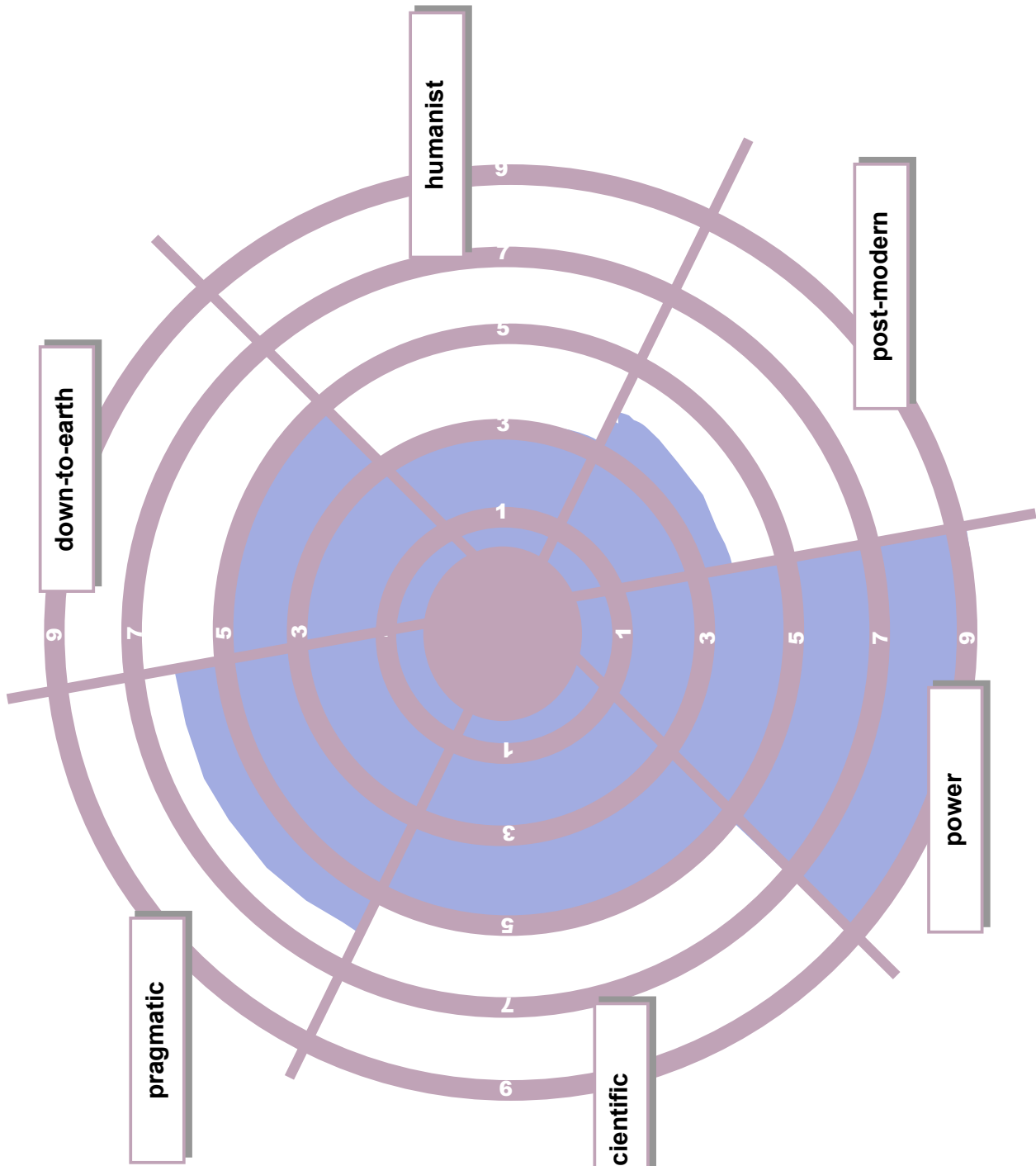
post-modern ...a **marketable on-line** approach to **chaotic contemporary** confusion, the **race** for jobs needs this kind of **innovation**...

pragmatic ...**proven** work, **embedded** in **real**, **operational** and **group-based** learning, for **life-long** use and increased **income** potential...

power ...focussed on **choice** of **employment**, firmly based in **policy** requirements, with **expertly** assessed **achievement** for a **competitive** economy...

down-to-earth ...drawing on **life-wide experience**, where people - from whatever **background** - access **mentoring** help, for them and their **dependents**...





displaying possibly contending positions in a philosophical cycle

the spider-gram identifies contrasting orientations - which may also be contested

> from the centre, shade out each segment - to where your responses reach

least support is at the centre, most support is at the rim

what task do you have in mind for this position

project proposal

Note

You are free to use this material with colleagues – print as many copies as you need. The only conditions are for professional courtesy – acknowledge the source and let the author know how it goes and how the material can be improved.

Background thinking

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Prayer, meditation and contemplation in career decision making

Liane Hambly

Introduction

In a rapidly shifting economy, the ability to face uncertainty and remain open-minded is often regarded as an asset to career management. Such an approach requires a particular mind-set, an acceptance that one cannot control all events and the courage to face and enter the unknown. This state can be defined as one of faith, a state which may be found in the religious and secular alike and which is increasingly linked to well-being. This paper reflects on the findings of a small-scale study into how people who define as having faith navigate career decisions, in particular the role of imaginative contemplation used in prayer and meditation. It considers whether such a discipline may be translated into a secular context and describes an allied approach that may be used by both individuals and career practitioners

Faith and well-being

Defining faith is the starting point for any discussion about its role in career decision making. We often talk about faith in terms of the religious beliefs that people may hold, referring for example to the Christian or Hindu faith. However, according to the existentialist theologian Paul Tillich (1952:172-173) 'faith is not an opinion but a state'; a way of being that enables people to have the courage to face rather than avoid uncertainty and anxiety. In psychological frames of reference this state is regarded as a positive or optimistic mind-set which fosters health and well-being. According to the Building Block theory of mental health (Fredrickson, 2002), it is not the practice of religion per se that leads to well-being, but rather the attitude of faith that may be engendered by certain religious practices. Positive emotions enable individuals to be more resilient, more creative and socially integrated, and it is those religious practices which encourage believers to find positive meaning in life's challenges that build positive emotions, augment personal and social resources and thereby contribute to health and well being. Religious pessimists are therefore no more likely to have better mental health than secular pessimists!

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In a rapidly changing education and economic landscape an attitude of faith in the sense of optimism and a willingness to accept uncertainty, is increasingly regarded as essential for career management and employability (Neault, 2002). This is reflected in the competences of the Canadian Blueprint for Life/Work design, the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (MCEECDYA, 2010) as well as UK frameworks such as the 'CEIAG in Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2011), the Northern Ireland Strategy 'Preparing for Success' (DENI, 2009), 'Careers and the World of Work' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). The emphasis of these frameworks reflects a change in focus from mapping out one's future to the development of career management skills such as confidence, flexibility, self awareness, resilience and the ability to network and seize opportunities as they arise. Whilst careers education may be regarded as the obvious arena for developing such competences, work with individuals can also incorporate a shift from an emphasis on the client's plan to their ability to successfully navigate change and uncertainty. Secular approaches currently used by career practitioners include Motivational Interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 1992), Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Bandler and Grinder, 1975a; 1975b) and Planned Happenstance (Mitchell et al, 1999). If religious practices likewise lead to such career management competencies then it seems important that this area be studied and brought into the sphere of career guidance and coaching; not only for any lessons that may be learnt, but also to ensure that career practitioners can work with those whose decision making lies outside their own experience, thereby making cross-cultural work both possible and effective.

The study

The study took place in 2008 and the detailed findings published in 2009 (Hambly, 2009). Questionnaires were distributed to a variety of faith groups and 45 questionnaires were returned. These questionnaires explored the impact of faith on career decision making and how it informed the process. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently held with 6 of the respondents who were identified to represent a range of beliefs: 2 adult Christians, 1 Muslim, 1 Buddhist, 1 spiritual and 1 agnostic. These interviews explored in more depth the practices identified through the questionnaires.

Personal agency and determinism

The findings indicated that faith was more likely than not to have a significant impact on career decision making (using a scale of 1 to 10, 71% scored the importance of faith as 5 or higher, with 18% regarding their career decisions as being 'totally' affected by their faith). Within a faith influenced approach there appears to be a high level of personal agency with only 2% of respondent agreeing with the statement 'I leave it totally in the hands of God. There is nothing that I can do'. Many respondents appeared to balance trust with having to take action and responsibility for the decision making process. It is this decision making process that became the focus for the six interviews.

Practices used in career decision making

The study revealed that people used a variety of methods including talking to people (84%), researching opportunities (58%), being open to unexpected opportunities that may arise (60%), prayer (62%), meditation (22%), listening to inner voice or feelings (47%) and noticing patterns or coincidences (13%). The subsequent interviews provided rich qualitative data for deeper insights into some of these methods although it has to be stressed that the small scale study may not reflect the diversity of how people approach prayer and meditation.

Prayer, meditation and discernment

Excerpts from three of the stories, of a Christian, a Buddhist and a Moslem are presented below. When read together common themes emerge as the interviewees describe how they used prayer and meditation in career decision making:

A Christian Interviewee:

Throughout the day I was praying to God for Guidance. The only way I can describe it is as a feeling of peace when I thought about leaving the course and a feeling of oppression when I thought about staying. Suddenly, my future plans with computers didn't seem important and I decided it wasn't what I wanted to do.

A Buddhist interviewee:

I would talk it over with people first and then I'd sit down to meditate. This would take place over a period of time as well. It wouldn't just be the once. I would try and really get in touch with my body, my feelings and what I'm feeling in my body when I think about certain options. I suppose that's listening to the inner voice. I'd sit there and ponder it but I'd have to be quite quiet and still, to rest with the feelings and the effect those feelings were having. It might be that I'd be slightly anxious or nervous but that wouldn't in itself make me not do something because there's a certain sort of anxiety that's just about change.

A Moslem Interviewee:

So if I was applying for a job I would do the Istikhara (the prayer of guidance) beforehand and then I would listen to my feelings. If there was a positive feeling then I would go for the job and if I got the job I would see it as part of God's will for me to do that.

The process of prayer and meditation for these individuals was not a matter of sending out a request and passively waiting for a response, but rather a discipline requiring attention and effort. At the heart of this discipline is the ability to create space for and to listen to one's inner voice and feelings, a process of contemplation. This contemplative approach to prayer and meditation has been used for many centuries and is a recognised practice across many religions. Within the Christian tradition it is often called the 'prayer of discernment', based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. According to Hughes (2008) this form of prayer can be used for every day decisions such as what career to pursue or how to manage unemployment or retirement. The practice consists of engaging the imagination to enter and experience each option available and to notice any feelings aroused during and after the exercise. Hughes suggests making a provisional decision and then noting whether this leads to an increase in feelings of peace or feelings of agitation, boredom and sadness. One of the Christian respondents described such an approach: 'I make the decision with prayer and time. I decide one way in my mind and see if it feels right. Then I decide another way and see how that feels'. Likewise the Istikhara, the Islamic Prayer of Guidance is meant to be used for any decision. The supplicant would say the prayer:

God you have knowledge, we have not, you have knowledge of the future and the past. If you know that this (whatever the option is) is good for me then make it easy for me. And if you know that this is not good for me then keep it away from me and take me away from it and choose what is good for me wherever it is and please me with it.

Having said this prayer, the person then has to follow the discipline of paying attention to any feelings, dreams, hunches that may follow.

Being open to the unknown – the case for challenge

The ability to listen to one's feelings and to discern which ones to listen to and which ones to ignore is not always an easy task. Sometimes there may be contradictory feelings and a resulting state of confusion; other times the feeling may appear clear but have its roots in misinformation, prejudice and an attachment to a comfort zone that may prevent growth. Therefore built into the practice is a recognised need to incorporate challenge, whether through one's own questioning or from seeking the opinion of others. The aim is to suspend one's own egoistic inclinations, to incorporate other perspectives and to welcome the challenge that they may bring to your own intentions. To achieve this aim a specific attitude is required, that of an open mind or willingness not to predetermine the outcome of the exercise. In Buddhism, this attitude is referred to as *Prajna* 'a state of basic intelligence that is open, questioning, and unbiased' (Chödrön, 2003:145). In Hinduism it is referred to as *Nishkama*, the ability to be fully involved in life but without selfish passion. Similarly the *Istikhara*, the Islamic Prayer of Guidance, recognises the importance of suspending one's personal desires and being open to whatever comes one's way. Therefore listening to feelings is balanced with an attitude of detachment and of openness to being challenged by others in the community.

Cultural preparedness

To ensure that careers work is truly inclusive one could argue that an open and unbiased mind is as desirable for the career worker as it is for the client. According to Arulmani (2011), what is customary in one context may be contrary in another and so the background and training of the careers worker may only prepare them to work with people who share that culture. In the UK careers work is still dominated by the Trait and Factor matching approach, despite there being no evidence that it is any more effective than any other decision making method (Bimrose et al, 2008:2), and with some evidence that such an individualistic approach may not be culturally relevant for many people (Arulmani, 2007). This dominance may lead career professionals to use this approach automatically with clients regardless of its cultural suitability. Furthermore, its over-use may lead to an impression that any other methods are less desirable. The issue of trust is revealed in one of the narratives, a Christian reflecting on the decision she made as a teenager. At that time she did not trust that careers advisers and tutors would understand how she made decisions and so chose instead to talk it through with other Christians, such as a friend and her parents. She even chose to hide how she made the decision from her tutor, pretending that she had weighed up the pros and cons instead.

If the careers profession aims to be truly inclusive then we need to challenge our attachments to the methods we use, not to be subsumed by other people's methods but to enter a creative discourse with the possibility of transformation. The adviser's own paradigms can be broadened and enriched by listening to and understanding the perspectives of others.

Ritual as a decision-making medium

The contemplative approach to prayer can provide a conscious and formal methodology for approaching career decisions, a ritual which facilitates a process of listening to one's feelings whilst incorporating self-reflection and challenge. If we look to secular professional practice the Trait and Factor method is likewise a

formal methodology which offers a step-by-step approach to decision making, systematically analysing one's interests and ability and then matching to the opportunities available. It may be the comfort of having a clear process to follow that, despite the limitations discussed earlier, ensures the popularity of this method amongst practitioners and policy makers alike (Bimrose 2006). It would therefore be useful to have viable alternatives that also offer a step-by-step approach, but which take into account the client's constructs and subjective reality. The following is a real life case-study which illustrates a secular adaptation of the contemplative tradition by drawing on the narrative approach (Cochran, 1997; Savikas 1997, 2005). The method may be used independently or facilitated by a career practitioner. It has even been used with groups of young people with peers acting as facilitators. The method uses the imagination to engage with each option, to listen to the inner voice and explore potential consequences, thereby introducing the element of challenge. Names have been changed to respect confidentiality:

Martin's narrative

Martin's dilemma is whether to train to become a primary school teacher or a counsellor with young children. He has researched both options and is aware of what they involve but is still unsure which path to follow. He explains this to the careers adviser who asks him if he is open to trying a decision making method which uses the imagination. Martin agrees. The adviser writes the two options on separate pieces of paper and folds these up so that the job titles can't be seen. She then asks Martin to hold the folded pieces of paper in his hand, to pick one and, on opening it, to ask himself how he would feel if he *had to* choose that option. Martin opens the first piece of paper, sees the words 'primary school teacher' and notices his own response. At the same time the adviser carefully observes any body language cues that indicate the psychological response taking place within Martin. The adviser asks Martin to describe his immediate reaction to which Martin says 'yeah, it feels ok', smiling and nodding his head. The adviser asks Martin if he can visualise a day in the life of a primary school teacher and to describe what he sees. Martin describes how he would enjoy the interactions with the young people, even when the behaviour was challenging. As he does so his smile broadens. Prompted by the adviser, Martin describes other challenging aspects of the job, pulling a face at the paperwork but saying it's not too bad as 'that's something you just have to do'.

The exercise is repeated with the second piece of paper. Upon opening it Martin looks more anxious. This is reflected back by the adviser and Martin wonders whether it's because that option feels new and less familiar. When asked to imagine a day in the life of a counsellor with children, his face lights up and his tone is passionate when talking about the issues young people may bring. The adviser prompts Martin to imagine the more challenging aspects of the job which for Martin would be dealing with child protection cases, but again he sounds passionate about the need for this. The next stage involves Martin imagining further down the line to a future scenario where he is qualified in either option. At this point there is an interesting shift. Martin looks surprised and says he no longer feels anxiety about the counselling job as he would be trained and confident in his ability. When he imagines having chosen teaching he felt disappointed in himself for having taken what he now realises is the more comfortable option. At that point Martin says 'you know, I think I want to train as a counsellor'. The adviser reflects this back and offers the option of staying with the feelings for a couple of days, to talk to people he trusts and to see how it feels when he does so.¹

Although the described method may be used independently by the client, an adviser can provide a safe environment and relationship for deeper exploration and challenge to take place via facilitation and reflecting

¹ Martin eventually trained as a therapist and has since worked in a school counselling service and with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

back observations. As with any method, sometimes there may be an immediate shift whilst at other times the process may not result in a decision, but provide food for thought by unearthing issues which impact on the decision. The method adopts many features of contemplative prayer and meditation; the imagination is used to enter the unknown and navigate uncertainty, time is taken to listen to the inner voice and other people are used to offer challenge. Whilst a facilitator plays their part, the decision is still one's own, building self-efficacy and the personal resources required to face change.

Conclusion

Imaginative contemplation may be used by those who pray, by those who meditate and by those who have no religious affiliation but for whom it works as a decision making strategy. It offers a step-by-step approach to decision making which can enable the client to explore options from their own perspective rather than from the adviser's, to develop the confidence to listen to themselves as well as to take on board internal challenge and discomfort. Furthermore, it enables people to discern what they feel in the moment, to respond to events as they arise and to enter areas which may feel less familiar. As such it may offer a viable alternative to the traditional matching approach and may suit a world which is more complex and changing. However, it may not work for everyone and, as with any decision making strategy, should be offered and not imposed.

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Knowledgeable practice requires more than practical knowledge: drawing on two counselling approaches for guidance work with young people

Hazel Reid and Jane Westergaard

Introduction

Guidance work with young people draws on counselling theories and approaches. When working with young people keeping their goals in the forefront is paramount, but such demands can place a strain on our desire to remain person-centred. People develop their understandings of the social world in relationships with others. The meanings they take from those experiences shape their values, identity and the way they act within the world and are evident in the way they speak about themselves and others. In a broad sense, these are culturally bound.

An unthinking 'same for all' and singular approach to practice can lead to the recommendation of interventions based on assumptions about shared goals and values. This chapter will draw on two approaches from counselling and consider how they can be adapted and applied to guidance work with young people (our focus is on work with young people, but the approaches can of course be used with adult clients too). The aim is not to suggest that we 'throw the baby out with the bath water', but consider how we can integrate insights from different counselling theories and approaches into guidance practice. Of course, that comes with a health warning; but rather than view the integration of separate approaches as risky, we view knowledgeable integration as an opportunity to extend and enhance practice. The two approaches we focus on are 'multiculturalism' and 'transactional analysis'. Both approaches invite the practitioner to reflect on their own position in relation to the clients with whom they work, ensuring a commitment to culturally sensitive, thoughtful and effective practice.

Knowledgeable practice requires more than practical knowledge

'Knowledgeable practice requires more than practical knowledge' is a quote from the work of Richard Edwards (1998: 24). It is used here to indicate that we can learn how to interview clients, we can draw on existing aptitudes and develop new skills and we can be assessed as 'competent' against a number of standards and codes relevant to our working practice and context. We can demonstrate our practical knowledge by reference to information, through the use of web resources and 'helping' networks: all of which are important for guidance work. But we need more – a list of competencies met and possession of a bulky folder full of policies and ethical codes for practice, does not lead to knowledgeable practice. The relationship between theory, policy and practice should be an interrelationship – an equilateral triangle. Even so that is a 'flat' picture of what happens in practice as guidance occurs in a rich, socio-cultural, historical and political context. So beyond initial training and consolidated experience, what can we do to increase knowledgeable practice in a complex world full of challenges and uncertainties – for both clients and practitioners?

We espouse a person-centred or client-centred approach in guidance, but can find it difficult to articulate the theories that underpin practice. Yes, the Rogerian (1961) person-centred concept remains central in terms of our approach to interviewing and we may recall other theories and theorists explored in training (e.g. trait/factor – Holland, 1997; developmental – Super, 1990 and opportunity structures – Roberts, 2005). Depending on when, where and how we were trained, we may also be able to make reference to a wide range of theories and 'newer' constructivist theories (see, McMahon and Patton, 2006; McMahon and Watson, 2011). However, the time required to revisit theory and/or explore new approaches can be severely restrained in practice that is target lead, policy constrained and resource poor: best get on with the job and not worry about theory! But does the 'job' conflict with our values and ethics, and our desire to be person-centred (Reid and West, 2011)? A knowledgeable practitioner will want to extend their understanding of approaches that can benefit their clients and enhance their own professional identity – albeit this can be immensely challenging in current times.

What is meant by multiculturalism in counselling?

The term can be viewed negatively in a world which is, understandably, anxious about terrorism and 'difference'. In the multicultural counselling literature, the term refers to any social variable that restricts an individual's access to goods and services, rights and abilities to act with agency (freedom) and responsibility. Whilst race and ethnicity are central, particularly where visual 'difference' within the dominant culture is evident, other aspects are important. These include social class, gender, religion, age, ability or disability, sexuality and so on. Parker (2007:36), a critical psychologist, states, 'What we think we know about ourselves is bound up with culture, and it is always from a position in culture that we reflect on what makes us different from others.' Thus our (Western) attempts to understand 'difference' leads to categorisation and can cause further marginalisation. In terms of guidance and counselling we need to acknowledge that most of our established approaches are ethnocentric, built on 'Western', Anglo-Saxon, white, largely protestant and male views of 'what works'. A person-centred approach, for example, assumes the individual makes a decision, whereas in many collective cultures, it is the family and community that decide: context is all.

Essentialist thinking

The philosophy that underpins the multicultural approach can be summarised by Michael White's statement,

'The person is not the problem: the problem is the problem' (1989:7). We need shorthand terms to focus our work and bid for funding, but categorising people separates, segregates and leads to essentialist thinking. In other words, this is thinking that certain behaviours are natural and given, rather than ascribed by others. It can assume, for example, that being NEET (not in education, employment or training), a school truant or an immigrant – is essential to who the person is, whereas it is an acquired label that does not describe the whole person. The label is a construction, given by others who have the power to apply the label. Consider the following story and the part that language plays in the labelling of young people. The person's language was shaped by the professional context and the economic discourses within which she worked, but it speaks volumes about her view of young unemployed people.

When working as a career counsellor with young people under the age of 18 who were unemployed and unable to access full benefits, I visited the local unemployment office to see how we could improve the process of referring young people for the limited financial support that was available. The person I met welcomed me to her office, pointed to the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet (one in a bank of several) and said "That's where I keep all the files on the youngsters you send, you can see it is a small part of my work." The drawer was labelled 'Kiddies Drawer' (Reid, 2011a: 149).

It is difficult not to 'jump to conclusions' in a desire to be useful and help young people, especially in a context where time is constrained. But that help can be misguided, if the practitioner is rushing to action before hearing the client's story, or finding out about the person behind the problem or presenting issue. The action in the case study below is appropriate and is likely to be helpful, but is instigated too soon in the relationship. The practitioner engages in essentialist thinking and the action demonstrates practical knowledge, but not much knowledgeable practice.

David is an experienced practitioner who works one day a week in a drop-in centre. Leroy (the client) is newly arrived in the UK and has been referred to him to talk about the impact his drug taking (marijuana) is having on his ability to attend training interviews. This is the first time they have met. Having listened to Leroy's account of why he has been sent to see him; David draws on his extensive networks to plan a programme of referrals and interventions that will help to reduce the use of marijuana and get Leroy into a work-related training programme – this includes group sessions with other young people with the same problem. Leroy leaves with David's action plan, picking up his guitar and a box of CDs that he left with the receptionist. "Is that you Leroy, on the front of those CDs?" she asks. "Yeah," says Leroy, smiling.

Multicultural principles for practice

If we accept that culture is a social construction, which changes over time and is not a fixed 'truth', a starting place for a multicultural approach is to explore how we construct our individual view of the world; before we attempt to understand a client's values and culture. This requires us to be reflexive – thinking about our self and the impact we have on our practice, *recognising that there is difference on both sides of the interaction*. So, how can we develop what Arulmani (2009) refers to as a 'cultural preparedness' approach to interventions? To move from an abstract discussion to practical suggestions, the following can be adapted for the work of guidance practitioners. It is an extract from a chapter which suggests ways of embedding multicultural principles and skills into counselling work with young people (Reid, 2011b: 72/73):

Sue, Arrendondon and McDavis (1995) have developed a detailed matrix for what they view as cross-cultural skills for those working in counselling. Their classification focuses on aspects of

beliefs and attitudes, knowledge and skills and is organised under three headings:

1. Awareness of own assumptions, values and beliefs
2. Understanding the worldview of the 'culturally different' client
3. Developing appropriate intervention techniques and strategies.

... activities that can be useful [to help with the examination of beliefs and attitudes and aid the development of knowledge and skills] include: reading; visits to extend knowledge of diverse groups; collaborating with clients to hear their stories; small scale qualitative research with clients on particular issues; presentations to share experiences with colleagues; discussions in supervision; reflective and reflexive journal writing; observations of the use of different models, methods and techniques; finding creative ways of hearing and understanding the 'voices' of diverse young people: for example through art, craft, music, theatre and poetry.

Mindful that meaning is culturally-based, if we take 'principles' to mean principled action informed by praiseworthy behaviour based on a moral code (in other words a concept that is stronger than 'guidelines' to be followed, or not); then principles that are informed by the matrix offered by Sue et al, could include the following:

- Awareness of own biases and limitations and their outcomes
- Recognition of the range of social variables that lead to cultural difference
- Knowledge about the causes and effects of oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping
- Openness about processes of counselling young people with a view to a collaborative approach that works alongside the young person
- Commitment to enriching understanding through continuous professional and reflexive development
- Searching for appropriate and culturally sensitive models of intervention, rather than reliance on established or 'singular' methods
- Awareness and understanding of the impact of negative treatment experienced by marginalised groups
- Commitment to outreach work
- Respect for young people's beliefs, values and views about themselves and the stories they choose to tell the counsellor
- Value for the language, style and manner of speech, whilst acknowledging there will be times when the counsellor's linguistic skills will be inadequate
- Questioning of the appropriateness and helpfulness of organisational assessment methods
- Awareness of institutional practices that lead to discrimination
- Congruence when advocating with, or lobbying on behalf of, young people to overcome relevant discrimination

- Understanding of the differences in communication styles and their impact, plus extension of own communication skills and methods
- Open-mindedness to alternative ways of supporting, including using the resources of the young person's community.

Where an understanding of multiculturalism in counselling provides the guidance practitioner with a means to ensure their practice is sensitive to working with diversity, the second approach to be examined in this chapter addresses a related, but different aspect of knowledgeable practice. The concept of transactional analysis (TA) (Berne, 1964), offers guidance practitioners a means to reflect on the nature of their transactions (communications) with clients. By analysing the ways in which clients communicate, a greater understanding of the young person and their world can be gained. In addition, the guidance practitioner can encourage the client to consider the impact of their patterns of transactions and to explore changes that could be made to ensure that their needs are communicated effectively. So what is TA and how can knowledge of this theory underpin effective guidance practice?

The principles of transactional analysis

Eric Berne, the driving force behind TA, set out to make some complex psychodynamic concepts more accessible for counsellors and others involved in helping relationships. At the heart of TA lie three key principles:

- Everyone has worth, value, rights and dignity
- Everyone has the capacity and capability to think
- Everyone makes decisions about their lives and these decisions can be changed.

Guidance practitioners will be familiar with this positive standpoint, which acknowledges the strengths and rights of individuals. There are echoes here of the person-centred philosophy in which most guidance practice is grounded. But where Berne's work deviates from a purely humanistic approach, is in the emphasis on the significance of the 'unconscious'. Central to his research, Berne observed 'transactions' taking place between individuals. As a result of these observations he suggested that communication happens in two ways; at a social level and a psychological level. Westergaard explains this difference clearly,

...we use words which are selected consciously to convey thoughts and feelings (social level) and we communicate on a deeper (often unconscious) level through tone of voice, facial expressions and demeanour (psychological level). Sometimes though, the social and psychological are in conflict and communication is incongruent (2011:77).

Guidance practitioners may, at times, perceive a tension between *what* clients are saying (social level) and the *way* in which they are saying it (psychological level). For example, the guidance practitioner's response to a young person who sits slumped in their seat, avoiding eye contact, speaking in a monotone and saying with no enthusiasm whatsoever that they 'can't wait to apply for a course at the local college', might be to challenge this incongruence. Where responses are incongruent, there is rich material for the guidance practitioner and client to work with.

The ego states

Berne suggested that our psychological level of communication stems from one of three separate 'ego states',

which he described as Parent, Adult and Child. Much has been written about the ego states and about other aspects of TA (Clarkson, 2005; Cornell and Hargaden, 2005; and Widdowson, 2009), and there is not the opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the concept here. But, in brief, Berne explained that we have access to all three ego states from around the age of 12 (we are able to transact in our Parent and Child from a much earlier age; Adult is the last to develop).

Parent

Transactions in the Parent ego state are learned from birth and are a manifestation of our observations of a parental or authority figure's behaviour and responses. Steiner (1990) describes transactions from the Parent ego state as replaying tape recordings of messages we received from parental figures when we were young. The Parent ego state is divided in two:

- Critical Parent (CP), exemplified by a stern facial expression, a harsh or abrupt response, a sharp tone of voice. For example: 'how dare you speak to me like that,' or 'stop that right now! Don't you ever do that again.'
- Nurturing Parent (NP), characterised by a soft expression, a warm and sympathetic response, a gentle, encouraging tone of voice. For example, 'oh you poor thing, let me make this better,' or 'don't worry, I won't let this happen again. I'll sort it all out for you.'

There are times when each of us unconsciously (or consciously) responds from our Parent ego state. For example, we might call out 'Don't you dare do that!' from our Critical Parent to a person who is about to harm someone we love. Likewise we might hold a distressed friend in our arms and tell them that 'everything will be OK,' responding to their plight in our Nurturing Parent. In guidance practice though, responses from our Parent (either Critical Parent or Nurturing Parent) can be unhelpful. They are likely to come either from a wish to chastise, or to rescue. Neither chastising nor rescuing are effective strategies when the aim is to enable young people to reflect on their situation and make their own decisions about options that are available to them.

Child

The Child ego state, like the Parent, also presents from two contrasting perspectives:

- Free Child (FC) is a creative, spontaneous or rebellious response which will often sound excited, naughty, instinctive or 'spur of the moment'. For example, 'let's forget work today and go to the beach,' or 'I'm fed up with this college course I'm going to leave today and not come back.'
- Adapted Child (AC) is the opposite of the Free Child. The Adapted Child seeks to please, to agree, to 'be good', to 'get it right'. Responses from this ego state might include, 'I can't do that, I'll get into trouble,' or 'I don't want to be a plumber but it's the family business so what choice do I have?'

Most guidance practitioners are likely to be faced with young people interacting from their Child ego state. This is often because it is the way in which the young person has learned to be noticed (or not be noticed) and to have their needs met. And there are times when we all access our Child ego state in a positive way; our Free Child at play with friends and family for example and our Adapted Child, perhaps, when we are placed in situations where we are required to conform or 'do the right thing'.

Adult

Finally, Berne identifies the Adult ego state as the last to develop. Unlike the other two ego states, there is only one element to the Adult. Communication from our Adult is rational, thoughtful, reflexive, assertive and unambiguous. Responding from our Adult ego state should not suggest adopting an unemotional, automaton-like tone; rather it requires an open, honest, self-aware level of communication. It means taking ownership for what we feel and taking responsibility for what we say. Harris explains:

When the Adult is in charge of the transaction, the outcome is not always predictable. There is the possibility of failure, but there is also the possibility of success. Most importantly, there is the possibility of change (1995:58).

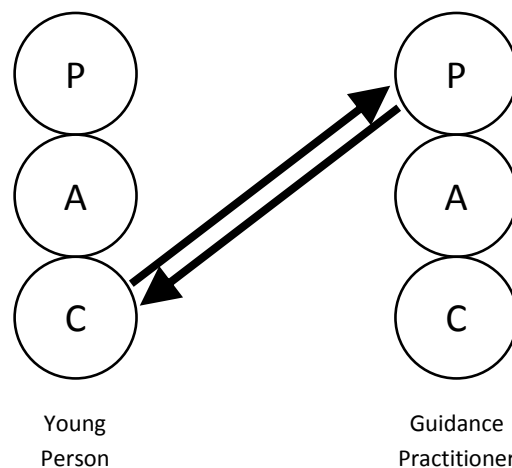
So, in a professional helping relationship, a practitioner will adopt the preferred Adult ego state. As Harris points out, it is from this ego state that change can take place; and it is at times of transition and change that most clients seek help. It is also from this ego state that options can be examined objectively, consequences considered and informed decisions taken.

Theoretical knowledge in professional practice

How then, do we transform this theoretical knowledge into professional practice? It is all well and good to suggest that guidance interventions are likely to be most productive if both participants (practitioner and client) are transacting from their Adult ego state. However, in many cases the client will present from their Parent or Child ego state. When this happens, TA suggests that there will be a strong impetus for the guidance practitioner to respond with a 'complementary' transaction. For example, where a client transacts from their Child ego state, the guidance practitioner may be 'hooked' into responding in their Parent. The examples below, demonstrate these complementary transactions in practice, the first example shows a complementary Adapted Child > Nurturing Parent transaction:

Young Person: "I think my mum wants me to stay on at school to get my A Levels, so I suppose that's what I'll have to do..." (AC)

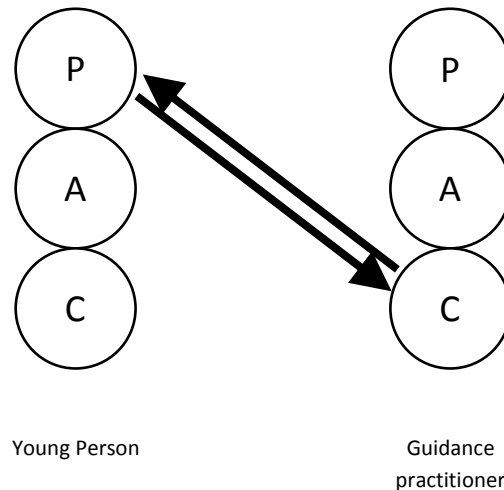
Guidance Practitioner: "Well, your mum has got a good point, hasn't she? It's important to do your best as qualifications are important, aren't they?" (NP)



Likewise, in the second example, an inexperienced guidance practitioner who is feeling unsettled or anxious with a client, may, on reflection, acknowledge that they are working with a young person who is communicating from their Critical Parent ego state and this has provoked their own Adapted Child response.

YP: "I've come to see you loads of times and still you don't get it sorted. What's the point in coming here to try to find a job? It's a waste of time!" (CP)

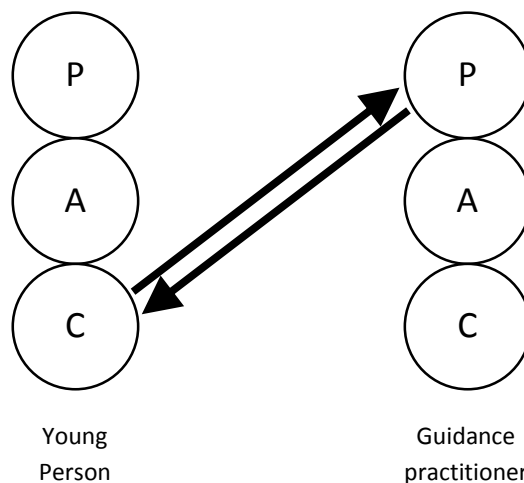
Guidance Practitioner: "Oh dear. I'm sorry about that. You know it's not easy to find jobs at the moment. What else might we do to help?" (AC)



Alternatively, in the third example, below, the young person may be transacting in their Free Child which may provoke a Critical Parent response from the guidance practitioner:

YP: "I don't care whether I get caught nicking cars. I'm having a great laugh with my mates." (FC)

Guidance Practitioner: "OK, but you could get into trouble and then where will you be?" (CP)



If any of the above transactions were to develop, it is likely that the pattern established here would continue. Thus the client would remain entrenched in their Critical Parent, Adapted Child or Free Child and so on. Given that it is from the Adult ego state where change is most likely to occur, the transactions outlined above

are unlikely to be positive and fruitful. In order to break these patterns of communication, the guidance practitioner should focus on remaining in their Adult. Over time, a consistently Adult response from the guidance practitioner will encourage the young person to respond with a complementary transaction (Adult). Thus, movement towards rational, objective exploration and decision making can take place. For example, below are some alternative Adult responses to the scenarios posed above.

Young Person: "I think my mum wants me to stay on at school to get my A Levels, so I suppose that's what I'll have to do..." (AC)

Guidance Practitioner: "There's something about the way you are saying that, which makes me wonder if this is what *you* really want to do?" (Adult)

The Adult response addresses the perceived tension in what the young person *should* do in order to please their parent and what they might *want* to do.

Young Person: "I've come to see you loads of times and still you don't get it sorted. What's the point in coming here to try to find a job? It's a waste of time!" (CP)

Guidance Practitioner: "I can see how frustrated you feel. It's difficult when jobs are few and far between. What can we do to make sure that you have the best chance of getting the jobs that you do apply for?" (Adult)

Here, the guidance practitioner does not get 'hooked' into the criticism, but instead focuses on the issue which is all about finding work.

Young Person: "I don't care whether I get caught nicking cars. I'm having a great laugh with my mates." (FC)

Guidance Practitioner: "There's a part of me that wants to say 'STOP!' but I know that's not going to help. Maybe what we could do is think about the consequences of these actions. What might happen if you get caught stealing cars, for example?" (Adult)

There are probably a number of people telling this young person that they must change their behaviour and it is tempting for the guidance practitioner to join the queue. However, a non-judgemental but nevertheless challenging response is likely to be more effective and keep the dialogue moving forward.

Not only does knowledge of the ego state model inform ways in which guidance practitioners interact with clients, it can also be helpful to encourage young people to recognise and acknowledge their patterns of communications. By so doing they become aware of how they might 'trigger' unhelpful responses in others or get locked into negative patterns of communication with key individuals like parents, teachers or friends.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined two complementary approaches for working with young people; multicultural and

transactional analysis. Where the first focuses on a 'way of being', a heightened awareness of the wider socio-cultural factors that impact on practice, the second offers a means of analysing communication to ensure its efficacy. And of course, what has been discussed in this chapter is not the only professional knowledge that underpins our interactions with clients. We are likely to draw from and integrate a range of concepts in our one-to-one work.

But both concepts discussed here suggest that there is more to knowledgeable practice than simply adopting a 'common-sense' approach to the work. Guidance practitioners who continue to reflect on the theory underpinning their practice, gained both from initial training and subsequently in the role, will ensure that their practice remains knowledgeable. Every client, young person or adult, deserves the best guidance service possible. Guidance practitioners who recognise the importance of continuing to develop expand and integrate their professional knowledge, are well placed to make certain that this is the case.

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6

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Age matters? An exploration of the similarities and differences in the values and beliefs of practitioners working with clients of different ages

Barbara Bassot and Barbara Shottin

Introduction and overview

Since September 2010 the Careers Advice Service for adults has been in operation. In preparation for this, new work based qualifications (including the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development) for adult guidance practitioners working in the sector were developed by Lifelong Learning UK and are now approved by the awarding body OCR. At the same time, qualifications at Level 5 were being considered for those working with young people. Subsequently the Careers Profession Task Force (DfE, 2010) recommended that all career guidance professionals should be appropriately qualified at Level 6, moving towards Level 7 within five years. To date there has been no suggestion of a single professional qualification, which might be needed in the light of the forthcoming all age career guidance service in England. This raises the question of whether or not practitioners who work with young people and those who work with adults see their work differently.

An in-depth qualitative study was carried out in order to explore some of the core values and beliefs that practitioners have regarding the purpose of guidance and whether or not these vary according to the age of the clients they are working with. In particular the views of practitioners who work with young people ('young people' practitioners), those who work with adults ('adult' practitioners) and those who work with a wide age range of clients ('all age' practitioners) were sought; in order to compare and contrast them to gain insights into their respective values and beliefs in relation to their work.

At this point it is important to be clear about the meaning of the terms 'values' and 'beliefs' in the context of this piece of research. When speaking to practitioners about their 'values' in relation to their work with

clients, this was defined as the relative merit, worth or importance of their work. 'Beliefs' were seen to be the conviction and confidence they had in their work. It is clear that the definitions of these terms overlap and complement one another.

The research questions – does age matter?

In order to explore the views of the practitioners, the following research questions were devised.

- What is guidance? In particular, do practitioners' definitions of guidance vary depending on the age of the clients they are working with?
- What are the underpinning values and beliefs of guidance practitioners? Again, do these vary depending on the age of the clients they are working with?
- Would these change in any way if they worked with a different client group?

As the research was qualitative, these questions were revised during the process of data analysis.

Methodology

Values and beliefs are individual phenomena that vary from one person to another. In the light of this, the methodological framework of the study was one of interpretivism with a focus on 'attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). A qualitative research method was employed in the form of semi structured interviews with five practitioners; two who work with young people, one who works with adults and two who work with clients of all ages. Appropriate interview questions were devised, which were open in nature, giving lots of scope for discussion. These were revised following a pilot interview. The interviews were recorded, watched by both researchers together and discussed, in order to identify themes in the data. It is important to emphasise at this point that this research is not intended to be generalisable to large numbers of practitioners, but it was done to gain insights into how the practitioners viewed their work and to give some pointers for possible further research.

Literature

Published literature in this particular area is conspicuous by its absence. Much has been written about the values clients hold in relation to work (Patton, 2000; Loughlin and Barlin, 2001; Brown, 2002). In addition, the values of practitioners within the professional helping relationship are also well documented. Such work is written from the perspective of counselling (Corey, Schneider Corey and Callanan, 2007) who point us to some significant questions. Can counsellors keep their values outside their sessions (often referred to as therapeutic neutrality)? Is this possible or desirable? The writers point to the concept of reflexivity, which they describe as the counsellor being sufficiently self aware to seek not to allow their values to impinge on the client. Where this is not possible, they argue that practitioners need to be open with the client regarding their position. As Corey et al (2007) assert 'No therapy is value free. You have an ethical responsibility to be aware of how your beliefs, or lack thereof, affect your work and to make sure you do not unduly influence your clients.' (p91).

Research findings

As a result of the data analysis, themes were identified, which pointed to key similarities and differences between the perspectives of the practitioners. These will now be explored.

Core principles

The data showed a range of core values and beliefs held by all practitioners irrespective of the age group of their clients. When asked about their underpinning beliefs and values in relation to their work with clients, the responses were very similar. For example, one of the 'young people' practitioners said 'It's about wanting to make a positive difference, impartiality, being non-judgemental, not directive' whilst the 'adult' practitioner said 'It's about impartiality, confidentiality, being non-judgemental'. One of the 'all age' practitioners said 'Striving to be non directive, non judgemental, offering a beneficial service. I get a personal satisfaction from helping people, getting them away from the mundane'.

These responses showed the commitment of the practitioners to a range of core principles, which they genuinely felt underpinned their practice. In addition, comments such as 'make a positive difference' and 'getting them away from the mundane' demonstrated the value they placed on providing a service they felt was professional and adding value.

Key differences

It was only when examining definitions of guidance that key differences between the views of the practitioners began to appear. Both 'young people' practitioners saw their role in relation to helping their clients work towards a positive future. One commented:

The purpose [of guidance] is to give them career management skills. To help them look at themselves, look at jobs and opportunities and see where they can be in the future.

...and the other said:

It's about self discovery [for the young person], not just giving them information. They have a future, different paths and routes to take, a whole future ahead of them. They are at a critical stage – the wrong choice can be very negative, the right choice positive. It motivates me!

Both practitioners were looking at guidance as an essential process at a crucial, positive and rather exciting point in the lives of their clients. They demonstrated the satisfaction it gave them to be involved as a professional at such a vital time for young people with their 'whole future ahead of them'. The practitioners felt that helping clients become aware of the range of opportunities available and assisting them with important decisions about their future was a very rewarding activity.

They seemed to see the guidance process as one of informed decision making, echoing what could be described as a traditional viewpoint. As Killeen (1996, p29) asserts 'a great deal of career theory concerns decision making, regarding this as the key behaviour.'

For both practitioners working with young people, guidance appeared to reflect the DOTS model (Law, 1981); helping their young clients gain greater self and opportunity awareness, enabling them to make decisions and move forward into a time of transition. There seemed to be reliance on a trait and factor approach, as promoted by Parsons (1909) and Holland (1985) and evidenced by the comments about crucial, one off interventions, together with the idea of 'right' and 'wrong' decisions.

There are clear contrasts when comparing these responses to those of the 'adult' practitioner. When discussing

the purpose of guidance, she stated it is 'to help someone who has lost direction due to events in their life'.

Her view regarding the purpose of guidance had clearly changed:

I originally thought guidance was all about decision making – now I realise for most people it's not like that. They need to be able to sit and think. They have to feel empowered. If not you can't get them to make a decision anyway. They need to feel they are being understood, just to have someone listening to them at a time of transition and stress. They want the confidence that [comes with knowing] they are having professional help that they can trust.

Like the 'young people' practitioners, the 'adult' practitioner also saw the guidance interaction as happening at a crucial point in the life of the clients, but did not see this as an exciting, forward looking time for clients, but rather a stressful, anxious time of transition. This could also be a time when clients have lost direction and are in need of support. This sometimes involved facilitating time and space to think, whilst being an impartial helper.

There was no suggestion of the use of the DOTS model (Law, 1981) or a trait and factor approach with adult clients and the whole concept of decision making as a key feature of guidance was openly challenged. Understanding the process of difficult transitions and how to help clients manage these (La Gro, 2005) appeared much more important to this practitioner than the established career theories of Parsons (1909), Holland, (1985) and Law (1981). This adult practitioner did, however, believe that the wide range of career and related theory underpinning her approach gave her clients the confidence to trust her and to work with her. In turn, this knowledge gave her the confidence to work with them.

When asked to define guidance, the responses from the 'all age' practitioners included:

Guidance is about informing people, enabling them to recognise their potential and their options and to look beyond the obvious and beyond their experience. It's very much about empowering them; about building their confidence, motivation and ambition.

and

To enable clients of all ages to gain the skills and knowledge to make decisions themselves. It's about an empowering thing. Not about telling someone. Not even about helping. I try not to say 'how can I help you?' because it implies I will have an answer and I don't always. [It's about] enabling people to become empowered.

To some extent these practitioners encompassed the approach of the 'young people' practitioners by talking about potential, options and decision making as part of the guidance process. However, the fact that an 'all age' practitioner felt that her role was to enable all clients to look beyond their current experience and the 'obvious', suggests something different from the long established trait and factor, matching approach. Both 'all age' practitioners also echoed the emphasis the 'adult' practitioner put on empowerment, building confidence and motivation, and preparing clients to make their own decisions when they were ready to do so.

Interestingly, despite encompassing both the contrasting approaches of the 'young people' and 'adult' practitioners, these 'all age' practitioners did not differentiate between their work with young people and their work with adults. They felt their approach to guidance responded to an individual need, rather than being based on the age of the client – some young people needed help with motivation or confidence building or

just needed time and support to think, whilst some adults needed help to look at their possible options and make decisions.

Working with a different age group

All practitioners were asked how they thought guidance might be different when working with clients of different ages. In response to this, the 'young people' practitioners said 'Guidance structure and process will be the same' and 'Guidance theories will be similar – similar skills'. The 'adult' practitioner also pointed to similarities, saying 'The principles are the same – the theory is the same', and again the 'all age' practitioners stated that it was 'The same model and structure for all clients. Core topics discussed are similar' and 'Both have lots of insecurity and want to talk about what's worrying them but both have the confidence to come for help'.

Asking practitioners how they felt personally about working with clients of different ages revealed some interesting perceptions. The respondents working with young people commented:

Hopefully adults will have already developed [career management] skills through what they have done previously. They are more likely to just want information.

and

With adults it would be going into the unknown; I'm not sure how advice and guidance would work? There could be limited training options, lack of opportunities and the choices available may not match their interests ... I have concerns about the limited support I could give.

Both 'young people' practitioners seemed to find the idea of working with adults uncomfortable. Previously they had both explained that they saw guidance as a process where they helped young people look at themselves and at their opportunities and make choices from a relatively standard range of options available. The presumption from the first practitioner was that adults would already know how to do this 'matching' process for themselves so they would not need professional guidance, simply direction to appropriate sources of information. Conversely, the second respondent felt that guidance would be more involved and problematic with adults since they would have a wider range of different experiences, skills and requirements and their options would be much less clear and possibly quite limited. For these very different reasons, neither felt attracted to working with adults.

The 'adult' practitioner's thoughts about working with young people were also interesting. Her views were that:

Young people don't want to say or can't say as much as adults. Adults need to get things off their chest and then they can move forward... With adults a lot have lost confidence. With young people maybe they don't have confidence but they haven't lost it ----and that's different.

Her comment regarding the loss of confidence on the part of adult clients seemed to point to a clear difference in this work to that with young people, who she felt did not usually have the same support needs. She viewed working with young people as a less complex process, where she would not be using her support skills and, as such, it was not an attractive option.

It was clear that the 'young people' practitioners and the 'adult' practitioner viewed their roles quite differently

and, as a result, found it hard to see how 'guidance', as they presently perceived it, would apply to different age groups. The 'all age' practitioners unsurprisingly had a broader view of guidance, encompassing the approaches of the 'young people' and 'adult' practitioners. In addition, the 'all age' practitioners did not differentiate their approach to guidance based on the age of the client. When asked about the differences between young and older clients, these practitioners did not focus on the guidance approach at all, seeing no difference in relation to their ways of working. However, they did recognise specific characteristics linked to the age of clients, which make different demands on the skills of the practitioner, as described below.

In some ways these practitioners saw adults as harder to work with than young people. They commented that 'Young people are not as aware of the barriers as adults. Adults can have lots of barriers and can use these as excuses for not progressing' and 'Adults often unpick it all—work with young people is often more clear cut' and 'Adults are more intense about what they want. Young people go more with the flow'.

In other ways they considered young people to be harder to work with than adults because 'Adults will tell you everything. They have their values and wear them on their sleeves, but with young people it's not cool to do that – you need to build up a relationship for the young person to give you an opening' and 'Young people speak with the voices of others – mums, dads, teachers. It takes a while to get their own voice. Mostly adults speak for themselves'.

Despite these different challenges linked to the age of the client, these 'all age' practitioners saw the guidance process and purpose of guidance as the same for all.

Conclusion

From this in-depth, small scale piece of research, the findings suggest that whilst practitioners working with different age groups may have the same core values, their beliefs about the purpose and approach to guidance may differ widely based on the age of their clients.

This study shows that the 'all age' practitioners saw the guidance process as the same for clients of all ages; the particular approach used with a client was determined on an individual basis rather than based on the age of the client. They seemed to incorporate all aspects of those approaches used by those working with only one age group. They also seemed to have a clearer understanding of the different demands that the varied age groups can place on the practitioner's skills, even though they saw the process as the same for all.

It seemed difficult for practitioners working with one age group to comprehend how guidance 'works' with a different age group. They appeared to find it difficult to understand how their particular beliefs in relation to guidance would transfer to working with other ages. In addition, their perceptions of the guidance needs of an age group they were not familiar with could be flawed due to lack of experience with that group. This suggests a very real training and continuing professional development need for practitioners who might be required to work with clients of a different age group in the future. It would be wrong to assume that all experienced practitioners would be confident to work with a variety of clients, if they have only worked with one particular age group in the past. In preparation for the National Careers Service, this research gives insights into potential training and development needs of practitioners in order to prepare them for their work in the new service.

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7

Crossing the line? Personal and professional boundaries in tension

Alison Fielding

Introduction

This paper will consider personal and professional boundaries, and the tensions which can arise for the practitioner when the personal and professional conflict. Though the focus is primarily on work with young people, many of the issues apply equally to work with people of any age.

Drawing on critical incident case studies as a basis for exploration, some key questions will be discussed:

- How do I remain young person focused in a target-driven service?
- Am I really offering a confidential service to young people?
- How can I advise a young person about something which is incompatible with my own values?
- How can I work effectively with other agencies if their culture and values are different from my own?
- What are the risks – and potential benefits – of crossing the boundary line?

Is it cricket?

I chose the cricket analogy, as the term 'boundary' is widely recognized, even by many who are not fans of the game. In cricket, the boundary is clearly defined, and is marked by a physical object such as a rope. The consequences for each team are also clear when the boundary is crossed, and these can be positive in terms of runs scored. However the nature of a rope is that it is flexible, and can be moved, it can accommodate things pushing against it, and can be stepped over. A flexible boundary can be beneficial in enabling a practitioner to respond to a client's needs and situation, but working with young people requires a different approach in

which appropriate boundaries need to be clearly defined (Geldard and Geldard, 2010). Geldard and Geldard (2010) also suggest that it is important to respect the young person's own boundaries, in terms of what they are prepared to discuss, and this can necessitate some negotiation to agree appropriate shared boundaries for any interaction.

Why consider this now?

The coalition government has made a commitment to an all-age guidance service, which will include services for young people to replace the provision currently delivered by Connexions in England. The way this service will be financed and delivered is still unclear (Watts, 2011), but it has been suggested that there will continue to be impartial guidance available for young people in school. Again there is a lack of clarity about what this will look like. For many young people, there remains a need for additional support, particularly for those with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD), and for those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). For many practitioners who work for Connexions, or the local authority, the focus of the work has changed from a more generic service to working mainly with young people with LDD or who are NEET (Connexions Kent, online). This has challenged practitioners' view of their professional identity and expertise, leaving many confused about the role they are expected to undertake.

To add to the uncertainty, David Cameron is committed to the concept of 'The Big Society' (Norman, 2010) with the implication that, as public services are reduced, practitioners will be increasingly reliant on, and therefore required to work with, a much wider range of other services, including the voluntary and community sector. This is not necessarily a problem, but is causing practitioners to question their contribution. Morale is low, and many are leaving the profession, either voluntarily or through redundancy. The need to be clear about professional boundaries becomes increasingly difficult as personal issues intrude. As Bond (2010: 41) suggests 'This dichotomy of ethical responses can be very uncomfortable and can raise fundamental choices between personal and professional integrity.' We can alleviate some of the tension by reference to professional guidelines on ethical practice, but still need to recognise the impact of the personal on how we take our practice forward.

The ICG Code of Ethical Principles

For this paper, I will focus on the ethical principles set out by the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG). These provide practitioners with the guidelines they need to ensure that they are working 'to the highest standards of professional behaviour as set out in the seven principles' (ICG, online):

1. Impartiality
2. Confidentiality
3. Duty of care – to clients, colleagues, organisations and self
4. Equality
5. Accessibility
6. Accountability
7. Continuous professional development

As we consider the issues raised by the critical incident case studies, many of these principles will be discussed. The ICG, 'whilst recognising the diversity of backgrounds and work settings of its members' (online), requires all members to subscribe to the principles and to apply them in their practice. This has informed my responses to the ethical dilemmas posed in the case studies. The principles of impartiality and duty of care recognise that work with clients must be 'based solely on the best interests of and potential benefits to the client' (online). This underpins the client- or person-centred approach to our work.

Client autonomy

When working in a client- or person-centred way (Wosket, 2006), we want our clients to take responsibility for themselves and their outcomes. These may be hard outcomes such as getting a job or gaining a place at college, or soft outcomes – which may be much harder to recognise and often impossible to measure – like improved self-confidence or organisation skills (Dewson et al, 2000). Many young people find taking responsibility difficult as they are not usually expected to be an equal partner in interactions with adults, and as practitioners we need to recognise this and encourage young people to become an active participant by sharing the process and making the boundaries clear (Reid and Fielding, 2007).

For this to happen, we need to be especially clear about our own boundaries, which implies a level of reflection and self-awareness. Bond (2010: 84/85) expresses this very clearly:

These dilemmas are intrinsic to counselling and have to be evaluated in the light of specific circumstances. Part of this involves asking:

- Am I as a counsellor taking on responsibilities which are more properly the client's?
- Is there a way I could respond which maximizes the client's autonomy and minimizes his dependence on me?

...Counsellors who systematically ask themselves these questions are much more likely to stay within boundaries that give clients their appropriate responsibility for the outcome.

It is important to recognise that this may take time, but that as the client is increasingly able to take more responsibility, the practitioner's role becomes less clearly defined, but should facilitate situations 'in which the client is an agent of change' (Winslade and Monk, 2007: 133). As the relationship between practitioner and client changes, the boundaries may well move, which may give rise to ethical questions which need to be addressed.

Ethical dilemmas

It is difficult to consider some of the ethical issues in the abstract. Often we know that we have reached a boundary when a situation arises that makes us feel uncomfortable in our professional response, or unsure how to continue to work with a young person. We will each of us respond differently to the following critical incident case studies depending on our own personal and professional boundaries. This is not a problem. We are each reflecting on our practice to make informed decisions about our response to different situations, and this will depend very much on our own previous experience. For each of these critical incidents, ask yourself: What are my feelings about this situation? What would I do?

Consider these situations:

1 You are working with a young person who left school last summer and is still NEET. She has become very withdrawn and finds it difficult to leave the house. You have been working with her to build her confidence and she is now able to come to meet you without her Mum also coming along. She is beginning to think about going to college in September. You have been told that the client is now too dependent on you, and that you need to move her on more quickly so that she no longer shows as NEET in the statistics.

Perhaps the first issue to think about here is that of the relationship between the client and the practitioner. It seems that the client is growing in confidence, but it is difficult to measure this (Dewson et al, 2000), and to justify continuing to work with her may be difficult in a target driven service. The number of sessions may be limited, though it is never easy to identify the number of sessions a client may need as so much depends on their individual needs (Green, 2010). When we have built up an effective relationship with a client it can be difficult to let this go, but we need to be clear that we are acting for the client's best interest if we continue to work with them, and to ensure that someone else will do so when we need to end our relationship (Reid and Fielding, 2007). We want our clients to move from a situation where they may be dependent on us, to one of independence – indeed Mearns and Thorne (2007) warn specifically against encouraging a dependent attitude in clients, though Green (2010) recognises that it is often a normal stage in the relationship between client and practitioner.

The second dilemma relates to the need to ensure that young people are moved out of the NEET group. Recent figures (DfE, 2011) indicate that the proportion of 16 – 18 year olds who are currently NEET is just under 10%, so the pressure on services to reduce these numbers is huge, and often causes tensions where appropriate provision for a young person is not available. Gracey and Kelly (2010) stress the need for more flexibility of provision to meet individual needs, as well as a need to get away from the unhelpful blanket term NEET, to something which recognises the distinctiveness of young people's experiences.

What would I do? I would put together a case for continuing to work with the client, based on slowly reducing the support provided as her confidence improves. At the same time I would want to work with her to explore the options for college courses, which would enable her to move from NEET to EET.

2 You are working in school with a 15 year old student who disclosed to you some weeks ago that his personal circumstances are quite stressful at the moment as his father and older brother have been imprisoned for assault on a neighbour, and he is now at home with his mother who is depressed. At that time he was coping fairly well and did not want any additional help. You have assured him that this information will remain confidential. You are due to see him again today. His Form Tutor asks you to give them an update on the client's situation after you have seen him. You ask how they know about this client's situation, and the Tutor says that the other Adviser in the school had noticed your note on the system and had mentioned it to the Tutor.

The first thing to consider here is the apparent breach of confidentiality by a colleague. In our work with clients we assure them that what they say will remain confidential, though with many exceptions when working with young people, and it is often this assurance which enables them to share sensitive information. Bond (2010:155) suggests that for practitioners confidentiality 'is probably the single issue that raises most ethical ... anxiety', and Green (2010) stresses the need to work within the constraints of the policy of their organisation. This can be difficult when two organisations have different views about confidentiality, in this case, the school expecting to have information passed on, and the practitioner having assured the client that this will not happen. Haynes (1998) suggests that these tensions are common in school situations, and are not straightforward to resolve. A further complication here is the intervention of 'the other Adviser'. It would be

easy to criticise this person for not behaving in an ethical way, but situations are rarely so simple. It is possible that they were acting in good faith, believing that it would help the client if the school were aware of the circumstances. It may be that they responded to a direct question about the client, or assumed that the Tutor as a fellow professional was included in the confidentiality agreement with the client. Winslade and Monk (2007) recognise the value in working with the wider school community to support a young person, but that this must happen in a context of informed consent to share information to avoid 'the dangers of circulating such stories around a community' (p. 128).

This takes us to the heart of the dilemma – what to do now to minimise the potential damage to the relationship with the client. The trust which enabled the client to share information with the practitioner may be shattered if he finds out that other people know about things he thought would not be passed on. What would I do? I would first explain to the Form Tutor the nature of the confidentiality agreement with the client, and stress the need to respect this in not passing any information further. I would want, as soon as possible, to discuss the situation with the colleague who had, in my view, broken confidentiality, in the hope that we could arrive at a shared perception of what is ethical in such a situation. Most importantly, I would want to explain to the client what had happened, and what I had done about it, so that he can continue to work with me in a relationship of trust. This is very difficult, and needs to be handled sensitively, but not to be honest risks damaging the trust between you, and ultimately may end the relationship.

3 You see a 15 year old client in school who tells you that they will be joining the Army as soon as they are old enough, and that their father is happy to sign the paperwork. They visited the Army Careers Office and got a very positive response. Their main reason is that they want to get away from home. You suspect that the client has not thought through the implications of this, but they are unwilling to discuss it further.

The first difficulty here is that, though we may be able to see that a client would benefit from more information and discussion, we cannot make them engage with this if they are not willing. We want our clients to make informed choices, but we need to recognise the context of their lives, and the impact this may have (Reid and Fielding, 2007). Kidd (2006:1) also recognises the complexity of the 'interdependence of work and non-work concerns' which clients need to take into account. The influence of family, particularly parents, is especially strong for many young people, though we would want them to make their own choices (Barnes et al, 2011). As Mearns and Thorne (2007:66) stress, the decisions need to be made 'without neglecting the constraints of his social context', and go on to suggest that 'What we are trying to achieve is the stimulation and promotion of the client's agency' (ibid). For this client, the wish to leave home may be more significant than the choice of a career in the Army.

It is also important to be aware of how our own values may impact on our perception of the client's choices (Wosket, 2006). My own feelings mean that this situation has always been difficult for me, but I have always tried to see things from the client's perspective. I think that 15 is too young to consider joining the army, and that a client of this age is too young to make an informed choice about a decision as big as this. However, my views may cloud the situation. So, what would I do? I would acknowledge the client's choice, recognise their wish not to discuss it further, but ensure that the client would know they could come back in future if things do not work out as they anticipate at the moment.

4 You have just been asked to work with a new Training Provider, and visit to find out what they can offer the young people you work with. The motor vehicle workshop is very impressive, and you can think of several clients who may be interested. The scheme is run by an ex-Army Sergeant who tells you that he will soon sort out 'the little toe-rags', and that all they need is

a bit of discipline, less 'mollycoddling', and to learn respect for teachers 'which none of them have'. You begin to wonder if some of the young people you had thought to send along may not be quite ready for this approach.

In this situation we need to be particularly aware of how our own values impact on our perceptions of what is right for clients. Culley and Bond (2004: 32) make the point that the practitioner needs to set aside 'beliefs about the way clients should conduct their lives' as well as leaving our own private concerns and preoccupations out of our interactions with clients. Bond (2010: 44) advocates a need for self-awareness since 'an unexamined value may become dangerous or counterproductive.' We must not make assumptions about what sort of provision will work well for our clients, based on our own perceptions, but give them the opportunity to decide for themselves.

The second issue for me would be the wish to challenge the provider's use of language in relation to young people, and the assumptions that he is making about all young people. Wosket (2006: 51) acknowledges the need to 'earn the right to challenge', to have a relationship in which it can be seen as helpful, and perhaps at the first meeting it is too soon to do this! So, what would I do? I would encourage young people to apply, but ensure that they were aware of the ethos in the workshop, and I would continue to work with the provider to move towards a shared understanding of the needs of the young people.

Conclusion

We have considered some of the issues around knowing our own personal and professional boundaries, and the challenges this can present in our practice. The clarity of professional guidelines (ICG, online) ensures that we understand the ethical implications of our work with clients, but we are dealing with complexity in clients' lives, so situations are rarely straightforward. Green (2010: 124) makes the point clearly:

Boundaries are there to serve the work and they do so really effectively. They have been developed out of collective wisdom and out of counsellors' bitter experience. However, sometimes, for sound therapeutic reasons, you need to take a risk and break or at least stretch them somewhat. ...Sometimes a human response is more appropriate than slavish adherence to a set of rules.

We can see boundaries in this clear but flexible way – the flexibility of the rope boundary – or we can allow them to prevent us from doing the best we can for our clients if we see them as rigid, insurmountable barriers. This is actually all about being professional, and exercising professional judgement, while retaining our personal values.

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Parental influences on career and life choices – when did you last see your father¹?

Anne Chant

Introduction

The Rogerian (Rogers, 1961) client centred approach espoused by careers professionals over the decades has served the needs of young people and professionals well. However in this paper I would like to pose a question. In striving to focus on the young person themselves are we in danger of minimising the importance of the influence of parental and family influences; treating individuals as monads, self sufficient units capable of purely individualised choices and self-efficacy? If this is true does this approach meet their guidance needs? Or, if young people are in fact progressing through their education and career with an unbalanced view of their opportunities without being aware of it, is the current approach to career guidance and learning sufficiently challenging? In this article I will explore the nature and potential of parental influence with reference to theoretical models and auto/biographical research; suggesting possible ways forward.

Setting the scene

First however I would like to present three verbal props to explore the nature and complexities of parental and family influence.

The first is that truism that 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'. My interpretation of this is that the parenting and nurturing of a child is the responsibility of a wider circle than that of the parent/s and close family. By necessity such skills, knowledge, qualities and wisdom are needed that they cannot come from one, two or even six individuals. In a traditional or less industrialised society this spectrum of needs may be met by the extended family and 'village', but in our own Western, more fractured society many of these needs are met by the 'professional family'. This of course is in line with the multi-professional team approach to the delivery

¹ A reference to the 19th Century painting by Y.F. Yeames of the interrogation of a young boy during the English Civil War. The answer that the smart boy was purported to give was 'Last night in my dreams.'

of services to children and young people that the Every Child Matters framework put into all our practices (DfES, 2003). So while we accept that parents alone may not be able to meet all the needs of a young person, few would argue with the premise that parents and close family have the greatest influence upon their development and the choices that they make. Pierre Bourdieu (2001) presents the concept of the cultural capital of a young person coming primarily from their parents and family, but in the same way that others (educationalists in particular) add to intellectual capital it is surely possible to add to, supplement and develop the cultural capital of a young person as well. However we cannot build upon cultural capital if we if we do not first explore the current balance of that capital; in this case the current impact on aspiration, career choice and preference of parents and close family.

The second verbal prop is a quote from Hodding Carter (1970) that,

There are only two lasting things we can give our children.

One is roots and the other is wings.

This rather mixed metaphor is not only an aspiration for parents trying to do their best, but also helps us to look at possible causes for the problems faced by some young people. For example the young person who lacks the confidence to apply for a university that is too far from home, does not engage in higher education at all and thereby fails to achieve their potential, even if only in the short term. For them the roots go deep; so deep that their wings are not strong enough to gain any height. Another young person may have wings such that they move here and there, living with perhaps one parent and then another. They may 'sofa-surf' or move in with a boyfriend or girlfriend for a while and then move on. With poor roots they may not get the nourishment they need, a feeling of belonging and identity or, in adverse weather, be able to withstand storms and winds. This metaphor gives us an insight into the notion of resilience that is so important in an ever more complex society, culture and labour market. It is a huge topic and I do not have space here to do it justice, but career resilience (Fourie and van Vuuren, 1998), the 'process of self righting and growth' (Higgins 1994:1) is something that needs attention if young people are to be effectively and honestly prepared for their future careers.

Finally, I would like to consider the third verbal prop; the poem 'This be the verse' by Philip Larkin. Those who know this work will understand that it would not be appropriate to include the full text here. Suffice to say that it presents the concept of inherited problems, generation after generation. He draws our attention to the repetitious nature of parenting; how we mirror our own experiences, both good and not so good. This may be so for other aspects of our personality, beliefs, values and of course Bourdieuan 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 2001). A young person raised within a racist household or in one where the role of women is limited to what is considered acceptable, is unlikely to challenge those 'truths' until much later in life, when perhaps they have the opportunity or experience to question them. So might we inherit our career aspirations (Inkson, 2007), horizons for action (Hodkinson, 2008) and interests along with hair and eye colour and our father's chin? We see evidence of this all around us; there are families of teachers, entrepreneurs and of course well known theatrical and musical families. Is this about pragmatic issues of availability of opportunities, networks or limited experience of alternative possibilities? Or is it more complex than this? Further more are young people aware of these influences?

Parental influence

This issue may be even more pertinent now than ever before as the influence of and dependence upon parents is elongated. As property prices and the availability of mortgages appears to push the age of financial

independence ever upward, the age at which young people experience new cultures, expectations and possibilities may also be rising. Paul Redmond's (2008) humorous but insightful description of the 'curling parents and helicopter mums' might touch a nerve for some of us. It tells the tale of parents who are obsessed with the success of their offspring, and of young people who are not learning the lessons of independent living and responsibility until much later in life than perhaps 30 years ago. How well does this sit with the career profession's attempts to be client centred when the client may not have any experience of having that responsibility or freedom? The longer young people are financially dependent on their parents, the longer there is for influences to have an impact upon their opinions, ideas and aspirations. If we agree that parental influence is a real and significant force in the decisions that young people make, the next question might be, 'To what extent are young people aware of it and to what extent are parents also aware and perhaps intentional in their influence?' Batista (2009) has explored the nature of influence in respect of the intention of the influencer and the acceptance of the influenced.

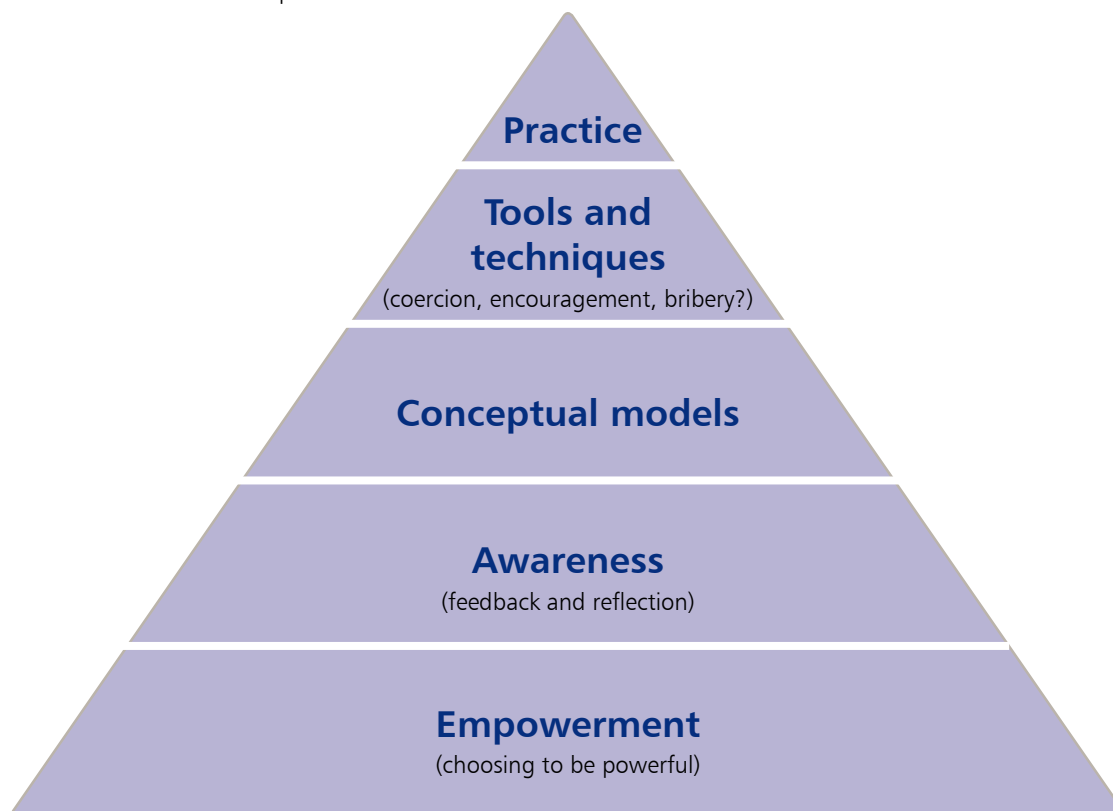


Figure 1. The Influence Pyramid (adapted from Batista, 2009)

In his Pyramid of Influence (Fig. 1) he proposes that in order to be influential the influencer 'chooses to be powerful'. That may not necessarily mean that in this context the parent makes a conscious choice to influence their child, although they may, but that they fail to check the power that they have over their child. This is then a question of awareness, both on the part of the parent and the young person. Batista has worked alongside the organisational behaviourist Prof. C. Robin (2010) to develop a narrative approach to therapy which helps to illuminate awareness of these potential influences. In this approach a great deal of attention is given to the choices that an individual makes in their lives and what shapes those choices.

While you may be wondering what the relevance of narrative therapy is outside a therapeutic context, the fact is that any kind of story-telling about our lives is an opportunity to see that story in a new light and thus reshape it... In my coaching practice, I often see clients recognize that how they describe an event shapes the choices they see (or don't see) in front of them.
(Robin, 2010)

The use of narrative can also illustrate the concept of the internalisation or externalisation of influence written about by Peterson et al (1985). They consider the notion of influences being so engrained into the person that it is no longer recognisable as having an external source. In other words, the individual presents the idea, belief or attitude as being their own. Alternatively they present the externalised influence where the individual is aware of the influence, but chooses to accept it or at least go along with it. Returning to Batista (2009) the influencer has chosen to be powerful and influence, and the influenced person has chosen to receive it. The influenced person knows that their 'horizon for action' (Hodkinson, 2008) is limited and so, one could argue, is in a better place to do something about it; find out information, question or reflect.

Might a narrative approach to guidance or coaching, as well as the use of narrative in a career learning context, offer us a tool to explore and illuminate parental influence? In my own research I conducted some loosely structured interviews with young people. I asked them to tell me their story from as early as they could remember, focussing on the changes in their lives and how decisions around those changes were made. One interview was with 16 year old 'Carol'. In Carol's interview two themes seemed to emerge. The first was the relative stability and lack of change in her life and the second her feelings about choosing subjects. Early in the conversation it became clear that the fact that Carol had lived in the same house all of her life, was significant for her. She states that, 'I've never been anywhere else...I guess it's getting more difficult for me to move...' The process of her decision making was discussed and she was clear that the decisions were hers and that she took advice and talked to people, but that in the end it was her decision. She shares some insight into why she thinks that this is the case when she explains that:

I think for my mum it was hard because she was sort of made to do things and she had to go and live in France when she didn't want to – so she's sort of always let me make my own decisions – that's probably why we've stayed in one house all my life!

Has Carol's mother, in response to her own past, maintained stability for her family and placed an emphasis on them making their own choices? It is clear that Carol believes that she is making choices for herself, '...no they were my choices – I just asked people for advice...' A little later we talk about the importance to her that she makes the right decisions and I comment that this is quite a big responsibility; and she agrees 'a burden in fact'. She is clearly uncomfortable making such decisions, illustrated by the regular acknowledgement of her worry about getting it wrong. This is a good example of what I believe to be internalised influence. Carol is firm about the owner of her decisions but acknowledges how hard that is on her because she has had so little experience of change.

In an interview with 'Thomas' another example of internalisation was illustrated. Thomas was a 14 year old who despite some clashes with his family and some behavioural issues, seemed fundamentally to want to become his father. Thomas makes it clear that his ultimate image of himself is that of a successful, responsible family man. He says that failing would mean 'like, not a good life' and that means 'a good job – a family'. Later he acknowledges that he thinks about 'now and...when I have a family...' At the end of the interview Thomas begins to talk about his concerns about the future. The language here is interesting and perhaps echoes his parents' words.

...what's happening in the economy – like they say that by the time you come out of university and pay your debts off you'll be 24...

...and the average food shop is about £100.

yeh – money aspects worry me and mum says that the price of petrol had gone up to £1.30 and that's ridiculous, and that's one reason I don't like the government 'cos I don't know how they expect **US** to pay for all of this.

In this last quotation it is notable that he is worried that 'they expect us.' He considers himself in the same situation as his parents and has taken on the responsibility (albeit metaphorically) and indeed the indignation of an adult.

However, influence did not appear to have been internalised in all of the interviews. 'Helen', a 16 year old, was aware of a number of influences and opportunities for support, including her teacher father. Early decisions appeared to be dominated by her mother, but later she comments on her observation of her father's role as a teacher, and the impact that has had on her own career options. She qualifies this by pointing out firmly that she would not want to be one; citing 'frustrations' and 'difficult children'. She also makes it clear that she would like to have a large family of her own and refers to her mother's experience of, 'hav[ing] to make sacrifices...it's like mum... she didn't have the career she might have had because she wanted to be a stay-at-home mum...'

The methodology for this small scale qualitative research was that of a constructivist approach. At the beginning of this article I referred to the concept of the monad; that concept of a person as an isolated, autonomous unit. However the socioconstructivist explanation of how people learn and 'know' suggests that this is not the case. Wlodkowski (1999:67) writing about the motivation to learn and these mis-assumptions of rationality and pragmatism, puts it well.

This state of affairs has been brought about by the complexity of human behaviour, the influence of socialisation processes on human endeavour and a growing realisation that claims for knowledge in the human domain are relative to the culture in which they are spawned.

The worlds in which the young people I interviewed were 'spawned' clearly influenced their ideas, beliefs and attitudes towards their futures. They were aware of some of this, but the process of telling me their stories enabled them to explore both internalised and externalised elements of that influence. Only then do they become more aware of the limitations of their own 'horizons for change' (Hodkinson, 2008) and, if they choose, be empowered to expand those horizons.

Practice

The narrative approach to career guidance developed by Savickas (2009) and explored in practice by Reid and West (2008), enables practitioners to recognise the issue of influence with a client. By helping the individual to recognise influences they are then in a position of deciding what, if anything, to do about it. However in the current climate in England, where individual careers guidance with a qualified, impartial professional may be under threat, it may be that it is the classroom that offers opportunities for exploring parental influence.

A simple way of highlighting the heredity of career and possible influences on a young person is by the use of the career family tree.

The fictional example of 'Jessica' in Fig. 2 could stimulate a number of discussions. There are some good examples of gender stereotypes in this tree, to what extent are they still an influence on Jessica? There are some key threads coming through the generations; how might these influence Jessica's choices? If Jessica's grandparents and even great grandparents were to give Jessica advice, what might it be? This could be given as an exercise for the whole class or, if there are no concerns about possible family sensitivities, by individuals drawing up their own trees with input from home. If appropriate the trees could be exchanged and questions posed such as 'if this was your tree, how do you think your ideas about your future might be different?'

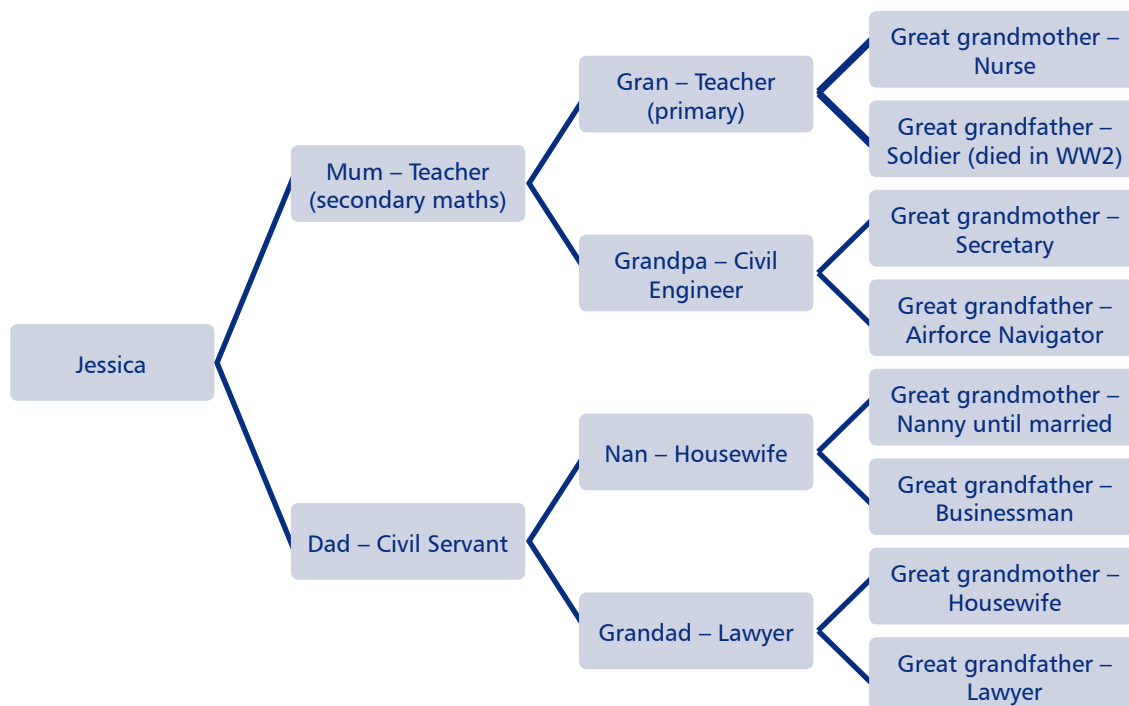


Figure 2. A Career Family Tree or Genogram

Chope (2006) concurs with this tool and extols the strengths of the career family tree or 'genogram'. He describes it as the 'best known tool for information gathering about family influence in career decision making'. He explains that this approach enables the counsellor to explore both genetic and cultural influences on decision making. But like all tools in this context, it is how it is used that is important. Much of this information is already known by the client, so it is the interrogation of the information that enables them to see possible patterns and influences. Chope lists a series of questions that, although based upon the basic information, may elicit understanding and reveal influences hitherto unrecognised and may highlight a narrowness of knowledge and opportunity. Questions include:

- what family patterns exist?
- which family member did you most admire?
- whose career aspirations are most similar to your own?
- what pressures do you feel when you compare yourself with your family?

The resulting raised awareness of possible parental and familial influence may be sufficient for the young person to externalise it, bring it out into the open to be interrogated (perhaps in a guidance session) and perhaps challenged.

Conclusions

In this article I have questioned whether the client-centred model is enough on its own to take into consideration and possibly challenge the powerful force behind parental influences on young people's educational and career choices. Perhaps there is an element of nervousness or naivety behind the reticence to engage with this thorny issue because as professionals we do not wish to be culturally or socially insensitive or offensive. However it may be that by at best paying lip service to parents' influence or at worst ignoring it, we are failing to meet the true needs of young people who will increasingly be dependent upon and influenced

by their close family. Of course we must take care not to make the mistake of assuming that parental influence is always a negative force, when in most cases parents influence, guide and encourage their children with their best interests at heart. But whether as practitioners we choose to address this issue or to ignore it, we might be well advised to at the very least recognise the presence of the parent or parents behind every young person in a one-to-one guidance setting, and also 'the crowd' present in the classroom. In acknowledging this influence as professionals we enable young people to do the same, so that if asked of a young person 'when did you last see your father' they could well say 'yesterday in my careers interview'.

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Keeping your balance on a floating raft: engaging with voices in collaborative working between statutory and non- statutory sectors in services for children and young people

Joanna Oliver

Introduction

This chapter documents the initial findings from an auto/biographical study exploring collaborative working within service provision for children and young people. The study was initiated during a time when service provision was organised within New Labour's 'integrated children's services' (ICS) and when partnership and collaboration was valuable currency for practitioners and organisations within the ICS (Cleaver et al, 2008).

Since the commencement of the coalition government and associated austerity-induced efficiency savings, this study has perhaps become more relevant than ever, as an opportunity to convey the stories of practitioners working with children and young people in a context where uncertainty is an expected normality. As one research collaborator, Ronny, a manager of a training organisation for practitioners who work with children and young people, stated in his interview: 'It's a constant change. A constant trying to keep your balance on a floating raft.'

The intention of this chapter is to convey the voices of non-statutory sector workers, George, Lina, Ronny, Sian, Amber, Andrew and Louise and to illuminate some of the tensions that exist in the organisation of contemporary children's services. All research collaborators have agreed to their voices being represented, although pseudonyms are used to protect their full identity.

The research methodology

Although not a central focus of this chapter, it is important to note the relevance of the research methodology and its relationship to the subject matter. The approach taken has its foundation in narrative and auto/biographical approaches, whereby the stories of the people interviewed, the research collaborators, are relational to my own story, as an academic, as a lecturer, as a doctoral student and also as a professional who works for an Independent Fostering Provider. Stainton-Rogers (2003), refers to the need for social research in particular to 'illuminate corners' and as a methodology that is somewhat non-prescriptive, auto/biographical research requires the researcher to be receptive to the illumination of one's own corners. Embracing the bias and accepting oneself as part of the fabric of the research, as Reid (2008) proclaims, in 'praise of fuzziness', 'understanding is always an interpretive endeavour and we cannot escape the culture and historical circumstances which shape our understanding' (2008: 25). Thus, my own story is as much a part of this study, as the stories of my seven research collaborators and the researcher/researched dynamic is in some ways reinforced by the parallel process of researching collaborative approaches, via a collaborative approach to research. Gehart et al (2007) define 'insider research' and I position myself in a 'curious stance', as 'learner' in the research process (2007: 375).

Distinctions between the statutory and non-statutory sector

The motivation for this research is grounded in my own professional experiences and awareness that there was, and still is, a tension between statutory and non-statutory providers of services for children and young people. For the non-statutory sector (charities and voluntary organisations in particular), an awareness of professional networks and utilising them in partnership 'arrangements' has for a long time been the most effective way to maximise resources. As Lewis, (1999:256, cited in Harris, 2010: 25) determines: 'the voluntary sector has always sought a 'partnership' with the state'. Harris suggests that it is 'not whether the relationship between the two sectors should be conceptualized as a partnership now, but how the nature of this partnership has changed over time' (Harris, 2010: 25). What is of particular interest to me is notions of partnership in contemporary contexts, where equality is prioritised, hence my choice to study 'collaborative' working between statutory and non-statutory practitioners providing services for children and young people. My interest lays in the nature and implications of independence in a context that demands interdependence and how this is experienced, interpreted and narrated by those in the non-statutory sector. Drawing on Kearney (2003) this type of working does not always fulfil the 'cozy ring' that it conveys.

Lina, a Director of a charity providing befriending services to children, young people and families reflected that: 'There's a certain energy you can only find in the voluntary sector. That unique showing of skills and passion... I think it's because most people in the voluntary sector are driven here via their personal experiences.' This is a continual theme in the study, acknowledging the relationship between personal and professional trajectories. Writing about third-age career aspirations, King (2010) refers to making sense of professional identity through biography and narrative and this personal/professional interplay resonates in this study. Lina went on to say that 'As a creative person, I wanted to work in a creative environment where I can use *all* of my skills.'

Andrew, who works as a community and youth worker, remarked upon how much the directives of the statutory sector and in particular, funding preoccupation, influences the work that is undertaken at grass-roots level and how this is crucially related to dynamics of control and power:

...the voluntary sector do amazing work on very little and the voluntary sector's work is often governed by what pots of money they can get...it's all...swings and roundabouts about who's in charge. Those grants are handed out by the very organisations that control how they want you to work, so if their drive right now was to have accredited outcomes, there'd be lots of little pots available for that...That's where it becomes distorted, and that's where the emphasis of what you do with that money is always controlled by where you get the money from.

This is not restricted to politics of power and in the words of Amber, a Director of an Independent Fostering Provider, relates also to a sense of professional freedom to exercise the personal influences upon professional identity, 'I think we can be more intuitive, whilst the LA have to be more political. They might have that in their heart but aren't able to do what they'd love...like to do.'

Lina, who has worked for both the statutory and non-statutory sector and began her work with her current organisation as a volunteer, reflected upon the differences between the two sectors and the way that this influences engagement from people who use services. 'In the statutory sector, the emotional door (of the family) is very closed to you. The family do what they have to, to get you off their back...I don't want to work in the public sector, it's too limiting.' This is an aspect explored in Barrett's (2008) study into notions of 'hard to reach' families, where she determines that the focus is upon the service provision, rather than the families themselves being hard to reach, making the service more accountable for unlocking the 'emotional door' alluded to by Lina. Barrett highlights that some families tend to be 'resource hungry'(2008: 49) and that this is unappealing in a context that is dictated by targeting 'more for less'. As Andrew asserts, 'It's all target driven work, number crunching to me doesn't always equate to quality.'

Meeting targets...meeting needs...making money... staying viable

George is a social worker with almost three decades of experience in the statutory and non-statutory sectors and is currently a Senior Manager of an Independent Fostering Provider. He reflected on current contexts, telling me, 'Local Authorities are focused on Key Performance Indicators, targets etc, and how can we unlock a child's story if we are focused on that? It's a sign of the times that things have swung too far that way.' This is a view shared by Amber, 'It's quite difficult if the need is about money and we're about securing good outcomes. The balance isn't there. We are focused on long term aims...as we say...transforming children's lives.' Lina contributed to this by stating, 'We could tweak what we do but government and policies change so often that we could end up chasing our tails and it's important we're not having to chase it too much, so as to divert us from the core, front line service.'

The tension presented by targets and securing good outcomes influences professional relationships across sectors and can endanger organisations and projects, as Barrett (2008:99) highlights 'impatience for results does seriously and directly undermine the stability of projects'. It is undeniable that families who are 'harder to reach' and perhaps most in need, require more time invested in them and often also require a greater amount of resources. As one of Barrett's research respondents declared 'It doesn't tick the number boxes' (2008: 49). In reality, this is not merely a cause for unbridled frustration directed at statutory partners but necessitates care and diplomacy, as Lina told me 'We don't want to step on any toes but, erm, funding toes, let's be honest!' There is a deeper consideration within this, however and it is crucial to the exploration of collaborative working across statutory and non-statutory sectors. The relationship between the funders and the funded and how this interrelates with notions of independence and also professionalism, was conveyed by Lina:

I don't think there is any charity who is really independent because as long as a charity receives funding from a council, or even big lottery is a statutory funder, you are no longer independent because you have to jump through certain hoops. Most funders will fund you if you are also funded by the council. It shows you are professional, you are well governed.

Professional boundaries and professional identity

As inferred earlier, there seems to be a correlation between personal orientation and professional trajectory and that working within the non-statutory sector offers practitioners an environment that is congruent with their individuality. Ronny was clear about how he benefits from working in the non-statutory sector:

I stay because it's not boring, I've got a large amount of autonomy, it's developmental and it's sort of fitted my own values because I've been able to shape things individually and personally. It's almost like running your own business without as much risk. The flexibility suits me and my personality and my style of operating very, very well. It suits me much better than any other structure...So I'm thinking...could I work in somewhere that is highly structured?

This is echoed in the voice of Sian, who has worked in the field of social housing and community development for more than twenty years and reflected upon her decision not to undertake a social work qualification to complement her degree in sociology.

Well, why would I want to go and do social work...because it's too prescriptive. They're going to come and say to me... 'you need to do this with this family' and I'm going to say 'no I don't', do you know what I mean? So there was no way I was going to get on, so that's why I decided to not do it because I didn't want anyone dictating to me, this is what I should do, this is what I should do with this family, because of A and B.

Another factor for Sian is in being true to herself, 'sometimes my voice gets me into trouble but you know what, I have to be true to myself and for me, I've always had that passion for working with people and that thing about injustice.'

Andrew told me that he found professional boundaries restrictive and in many ways a hindrance to professional practice, although he recognised that there is a need for some type of framework. George defined professional practice as a combination of inherent attributes and focused learning and development, within a professional training environment:

Good people, in whatever job they do, need personality and common sense...if you have professional training on top of that, that can only help – because if you've got the training but not the personality and common sense, that's not great and I've seen that many times. Some times, some people don't get it right in those situations.

The sense of being true to self was evident in interviews with all research collaborators and perhaps austerity brings challenges to the synchronicity of personal values and professional norms, as Amber surmised:

[Being a] business and caring for children is a whole ethical consideration...I've come to terms with it in my head...We are in a fortunate position of being able to hold on to our values but still be a business and still work collaboratively, which is about communication, responsiveness, professionalism, presenting professionally, and so on.

Potentially, the notion of 'coming to terms with it [whatever that may be in a range of settings] in [one's] head', is a key justification for the role of reflective spaces, to nurture reflective and effective professional

practice. George stated quite simply that 'Reflective practice is important...and sometimes our LA colleagues struggle to do that'. It would seem that reference to statutory workers as 'colleagues' is an important foundation for beginning the process of collaborative working.

Collaborative working in services for children and young people

Partnership working is not a new concept (Alcock, 2010) and it is an encompassing term used to describe a range of activities and relationships, from a contractual, bureaucratic arrangement between two parties, to parties working together, perhaps in more informal arrangements, to achieve the best outcomes for the child or young person. The focus of this study is upon collaborative working, chosen in view of its relational and dialogical philosophy, described by Anderson (2007:33), as 'people creating meaning with each other and finding ways to go on'. Although 'collaboration' is conceptualised by Frost (2005) as only the second stage of four, ranging from 'cooperation', through to 'integration', it is the process of collaboration that I feel is at the crux of effective working together. As Ronny told me, 'Cross fertilization is invaluable in the current climate. Distinctions between Local Authority and so-called third sector is becoming increasingly blurred because a lot of services are being privatized – so, who is what?' What is abundantly clear is that 'finding ways to go on' is a necessary focus in times where organisations are crumbling and people are losing jobs and in acknowledging that these factors detract from the importance of placing the child or young person at the centre. As George concluded:

There are some instances where because we are dealing with children, that partnership can become difficult...that's not unusual...it can be professionally fractious but I think we need to ensure we are professional within that, so we maintain those relationships and networks and move forward toward a common goal.

Collaboration requires a mutual investment and acknowledgement of overt and covert power dynamics that exist. Cleaver et al (2008: 105) highlight that 'personal contacts' is crucial and that practitioners in their study 'reported that personal contacts enabled them to easily clarify and resolve issues.' This may be difficult in a context whereby working with others is not necessarily a choice, as in Andrew's view:

I suppose in this field, you're pushed, encouraged or erm, yeah, encouraged to do partnership work, to work in partnership with other organisations and the statutory sector...I mean, you use them...as the voluntary sector and I suppose a lot of people in the voluntary sector wouldn't admit this but they do it more for the financial advantages than anything else, if you can do something in partnership and they'll pay for that (slight laughter), do you know what I mean?

Lina also portrays a perspective about the way that services are organised, determining that partnership 'should' happen, which is less about collaboration and more about buying into the context, introduced by the previous Labour government (directed predominantly by Every Child Matters (2003) and the Children Act (2004) and still significantly influencing activity at statutory and non-statutory level). 'A lot of our referrals come from Social Services, so we have to work in partnership. We have to be really careful...we can disagree with social workers but they are the statutory service and we are not.'

This echoes the findings of Griffin and Carter (2007), who also highlight that statutory workers, such as social workers, who worked in co-location in non-statutory provision could 'stigmatise the programmes' (2007: 117) and that 'Integration of services at the strategic management level does not guarantee effective joint working at the level of service delivery.' (2007: 120).

'Stand still, go backwards' – some concluding thoughts

In the context of services for children and young people, change is inevitable and 'It has become a prerequisite for people working with children, young people and young people's services to develop a positive relationship to change; in order to be responsive to the transience that is a key feature of the work in contemporary society' (Oliver, 2010: 73). Even before the coalition government came to power and before the funding cuts and widespread restructuring and redundancy, 'practitioners [were] in a state of flux, as they await the outcomes of ongoing consultations and analysis, which determine their position, their job role and perhaps their validity within the workforce' (Oliver, 2010: 73/74). Whilst I position the non-statutory sector as the oppressed, subject to the will of the government, it is important to acknowledge the resilience of the sector. 'Stand still and you'll go backwards' is a phrase used by George in his interview and was echoed, one way or another, in all of the interviews.

Creativity is a viable currency in the current climate and it was generally conveyed in this research that the non-statutory sector practitioners have more opportunity to be creative. Louise, a Director of an Independent Fostering Provider, told me, 'In the Independent Sector... Maybe we have more freedom to be creative – I don't know if that's unfair to say.' This seemed to be an important reflection, with Amber stating, 'We're adaptable aren't we? If you think about all of the changes we've faced – going from one thing to another and so on. We've adapted and done well with each adaptation'. Sian echoed this, speaking of 'the people who cared were the ones that would try something new.' Perhaps the most creative approach was conveyed by Ronny, who appears to align himself to my notions of chameleonism (Oliver, 2010), when he gives this example:

The model we use is based on say, street sellers in West Africa. That's erm, people who hustle on the streets – selling anything in demand at a price that suits the client. It's not a written model but it is a model that sits at the back of my mind so we would never say no to anybody, or anything.

Perhaps in austere times, staying viable and staying true to professional values is about approaching change and challenge with increased responsiveness and flexibility to secure good enough outcomes for children and young people. Perhaps this position is a necessary anxiety for statutory services, who will seek surety from their partners, whilst also requiring innovative and progressive action. This is neither a combative or passive position but rather a 'responsive resistance': as Ronny asserted 'I think there should be a responsive resistance to what is going on... attempting to influence even if in a small way.'

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Ian King, 'Vocational Pathways: The occupational experiences of older professional practitioners', pp 79-86

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Vocational Pathways: The occupational experiences of older professional practitioners

Ian King

Introduction

With people living and being expected to work longer, this paper focuses on how to encourage older workers to determine future career direction by reflecting on their past vocational pathway. The reported research engaged professional practitioners (aged 50+) by asking them to co-construct their occupational story; the narrative interviews chronicle the reality of their occupational lives and the lifestyle choices they face.

Traditionally, practitioners working in professional services have made career decisions through structured or interactive interventions, e.g. work-based assessment, qualification and reputational profile (the 20th century focus on fact), but are there alternative approaches centring on the meaning that older workers can assimilate from their occupational experiences? This paper positions occupational narrative as a vehicle for making career decisions in later working life (a 21st century focus on vocational meaning) and proposes that it creates a coherent exposition of experience, enabling older professional workers to re/shape vocational meaning as they make a transition toward workplace disengagement.

Exploring career meaning

In this paper I explore the occupational journeys that professional workers have navigated – for most, as Whyte observes, 'a hidden journey, a secret code, deciphered in fits and starts' (2001:8), unknown at the outset. As they approach their occupational destination, this journey is clear in terms of the itinerary taken, but often obscure in terms of its meaning for the person who has undertaken the journey. Embracing vocational coherence offers the person who has driven their career forward, a focus on past experiences and future possibilities. In the contemporary workplace, an individual's decision to retire is not easy, as the concept of

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retirement is contested in an era where economic and political drivers are changing the meaning of retirement from a defined date, traditionally known as the state retirement age (SRA), to one of flexible transition dependent on personal preferences, obligations and organisational vagaries. In 1998, Phillipson suggested that 'older workers increasingly find themselves on the margins of the labour market but with a number of years ahead of them before they reach the comparative safety of retirement... [defined as] entry into a public old-age pension scheme' (1998: 60 and 59). So what do older professional practitioners think about their career options in the concluding stages of their occupational existence?

Traditional approaches to career decision-making have focused on the psychological determinants of occupational choice, but contemporary thinking additionally reflects on the sociological considerations that affect an individual's occupational emergence and stir their narrative imagination. As Mahoney and Patterson contend 'human knowing is a process of 'meaning making' by which personal experiences are ordered and organized' (1992:671); an older worker's occupational memoir represents an artefact of meaning, a co-construction of their narrative testimony built around the influences of temporality, exigency and contextualisation. The experience of a professional is determined within a continuum of time, possibly a period of up to 45 years for some, or longer dependent on their continuing residence within their sphere of occupational working. The organisational environment, through which they travel, has an impact on their career experience, in terms of organisational stability and sustenance, and is likely to be influenced by the intensity of that turbulence. Their purpose in writing an occupational memoir is to express meaning for their occupational self, an act of self proclamation or, as Freeman suggests, a process of 'rewriting the self' (1993:3).

Positioning occupational reflection

So who is the group of older workers whose occupational journeys I chose to explore? Having experienced the turbulence of organisational life in the 21st century (for an account of this see King, 2007), I decided to investigate the occupational experiences of a small group of professionals working within business consulting to see how their occupational choices had been/were being interpreted. My research group was opportunistic – described by Cohen et al (2000:143) as 'convenience sampling' – a group of collaborators defined within the population boundaries of professional qualification and aged between 50 and 64. The final group, selected as a result of familiarity, introduction and participatory willingness, comprised three women, nine men and represented three distinct domains of professional practice – accountants (six), lawyers (two) and management consultants (four). This group reflect what Eraut (1994) recognised as being the central features or characteristics of professionals, namely:

- 'specialist knowledge-base' that legitimised the tenure of specialist knowledge and limited access to that depository of knowledge to competent, that is qualified, practitioners,
- 'autonomy' that, whilst resulting in increased accountability in terms of professional adherence, simultaneously secured operating freedoms, and
- 'service' a concept that infers that action is required to reflect client needs and imposes an obligation on the professional practitioner to deliver to the standard anticipated.

The organisations within which these professionals work are described by Tilly (1984) as an intangible 'big structure' set up to address commercial inadequacies and to concentrate power. These characteristics present an occupational image of the type of people, and their employing organisations, embraced by my research.

Having located my research population, my principal research aims were to enable older professional workers to give voice to their career story, reflect on their occupational narrative to identify their career aspirations and to model an approach to occupational review that would enable them to seek guidance pending their advancement toward workplace disengagement.

Realising societal influences

In earlier centuries a person worked until they died or ceased due to ill health or forced lay-off, but, from the early years of the 20th century, the concept of the 'pension' emerged and the government introduced their first state pension scheme. Following World War II, the government supported the further development of the state pension and also occupational schemes believing in 'stable employment' and 'traditional careers'. However, in contemporary 21st century, the impact of global forces – economic, political and sociological – have replaced these constructs with the emergence of 'fragmented careers' and continuing uncertainty about employability. This uncertainty is problematic as society faces the challenges of new demographic factors outlined by McNair (2009) as:

- most people can expect to spend 1/3 of their lives in retirement
- there are now more people over 59 than under 16
- 11.3 million people are over state pension age
- life expectancy for a 65 year old today is now 85 for men and 88 for women
- (many) lives are more discontinuous and complex; 'retirement' is problematic
- moving from a from a 3 to 4-phase life course (0-25, 25-50, 50-75 and 75+).

This summary shows that a significant number of the population is spending an increasing part of their life participating in a period traditionally thought of as 'retirement', but is this a realistic concept in contemporary professional life? With more people making a transition to a phase of occupational withdrawal, professional practitioners, along with all older workers, need to address a number of economic and social issues, such as their finances, obligations (including responsibilities for elderly relatives) and aspirations for a continuing occupational usefulness in an extended period of potential working life.

The challenges encountered include the meaning of (flexible) retirement, identity as represented by occupational existence, the self perception of professional status and the opportunity to continue in employment with the option of choosing when to disengage and withdraw from active employment. This latter challenge is more difficult for older workers forced out of work through displacement and redundancy for, as Ford notes, third-age employment 'starts at 45+, because 45 is now the approximate point at which age can begin to present both men and women with significant (and for many, acute) problems in securing suitable employment' (1996:1). My research is, therefore, designed to enable older professional workers to consider the narrative value of their occupational continuum; in other words a reflexive approach to understanding self and occupational experience.

Embracing occupational continuum

A person's career journey is bounded by their existence in time; we are a product of our intrinsic capabilities,

skills and qualifications, located within an occupational continuum – a coherent whole characterised as a collection, sequence, or progression of job roles. When recounting their occupational story a person interprets their past and believes that it has a contribution to their future by utilising the concept of ‘temporality’, that is the framing of their experiences in terms of the relativity of time. In narrative terms it is the anticipation that we can recall our past in a structured or chronological sequence of events that we have experienced and now hold in memory, but is the structure of time portrayed in narrative equivalent to this chronological time? Frow, in reflecting on the structure of a story by Borges, suggests that ‘it is predicated on the non-existence of the past, with the consequence that memory, rather than being the repetition of the physical traces of the past, is a construction of it under conditions and constraints determined by the present’ (2007:153). Faced with the prospect that there is no objective way of determining past occupational experience, how can the older worker envisage their past other than by writing it down? In his landmark text, Gergen refers to two narrative forms – the progressive and regressive – noting that they represent a way in which a person can locate their identity ‘in terms of whether they move toward or away from the valued goal’ (2009:39). These are illustrated in the following figure:

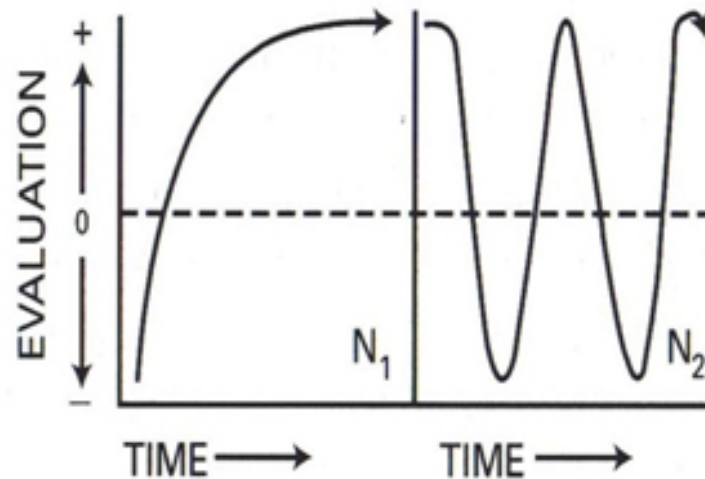


Figure 1. Representations of Working Life

Narrative ‘Happily-ever-after’ (N1) and ‘Heroic saga’ (N2) profiles (Gergen, 2009)

To enable my collaborators’ early reflection on their occupational experiences, I asked them to create a profile plotting the ‘highs and lows’ of their occupational experiences over time showing the turning points and, if possible, colour coded to illustrate their degree of satisfaction with their progress, or, as Gergen posits, their progress toward ‘some kind of endpoint or goal’ (2009: 39). Cochran describes this form of narrative representation as a ‘life plot’ (1997:60) – this temporal perspective on the extraction of narrative reinforces the view of social constructivism that story is a revisualisation of past memories in the present or, in other words, a contemporary reconstruction of historical images of past events. This approach, to creating an occupational profile, enables an individual to recollect quickly their career travels compared to other forms of occupational interpretation, which require more in depth analysis and do not necessarily add any new dimension to an individual’s appreciation of their occupational self.

Vocalising occupational memoirs

Rodgers in his introduction to the republication of ‘The Narrative of William Spavens’ records that ‘he had no didactic purpose beyond telling a good story, and he was blessed with an accurate memory and an interesting

career' (2000:9). This reflection, on the narrative account of an 18th century seafarer, is equally apposite for my research collaborators, whose recollections highlight the differing career pathways they have lived. I encouraged my collaborators to tell me their stories through a semi structured interview which involved them recollecting their occupational trajectory in response to an open question 'please tell me about your occupational experiences to date', what Spradley (1979) describes as a descriptive experience question. With minimal intervention on my part, this resulted in up to 45 minutes of story describing their recollection of the principal incidents within their career journey. I followed this open conversation with a number of closed questions focusing on specific issues such as future aspirations, life obligations and professional allegiance. With their permission, I recorded each interview, transcribed it and asked for their approval of the transcribed text – this edited version became the document that I used as my principal research artefact and analysed to locate the key themes in my collaborators' occupational narratives.

In the two stories highlighted in figure 2, the occupational trajectories of Ann and Charles (not their real names) are illuminated in sketch form showing some of the principal influences and turning points in their long careers.



Figure 2. Sketches of Occupational Life

As an accountant, Ann's story illustrates the vagaries of a career which she has continually had to reinvent and reinvigorate as she strives to sustain a purposeful occupational existence. On the other hand, Charles's story (a lawyer) shows the privileged progression of an individual determined to achieve the ultimate accolade of professional practice, namely partnership in his own firm; albeit on terms that sometimes proved unacceptable and ultimately resulted in self-determined withdrawal. These two stories illuminated the actualities of professional life and show, from two very different perspectives, the reality of professional practice in the 21st century. One other story that recognises the reality of what can happen is that of Jack, a Health and Safety consultant, who, after a long trajectory in government and self employed consulting, found that his working life came to an abrupt end when, due to funding cutbacks, his principal employer, a government agency, was no longer able to offer him a consulting portfolio. Of these three stories, only one, that of Charles', records the ascendant/progressive nature of professional life, whilst the other two show a professional life continually affected by the reality of 21st century working life, namely changes enforced by economic, social and political drivers. These sketches are a small representation of the hundreds of pages of raw transcript that I collected and can only locate some of the principal messages – economic drivers, organisational influences and personal challenges influencing my collaborators' occupational journeys.

To extract meaning from these stories, I had to determine a way of interpreting them to locate and confirm the principal findings that I heard in my collaborators' stories. Here I faced another research challenge – how

to organise and make sense of the stories that I had encouraged my respondents to tell. Boyatzis (1998) suggests that 'a theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon' (preface, p. vi). This practical observation indicates that a possible solution to my encounter was to identify a pattern of 'occupational themes' that acknowledged the phenomenon that I recorded within my portfolio of occupational texts.

Again, I needed to adapt my thinking in order to accommodate my research progression; my natural inclination, as a logical rational researcher, was to seek a method or instrument that would locate these themes for me, but, after some intense deliberation, I realised that this was impractical. I assimilated the concept that, as Riessman notes, 'theorizing across a number of cases by identifying common thematic elements across research participants, the events they report, and the actions they take is an established tradition with a long history in qualitative inquiry' (2008:74). This approach to occupational interpretation requires an independent enquiry that reflects the principal insights that the raw data are presenting – initially I thought this meant that I had to reconstruct my respondent's occupational story by interpreting their story in a form that created some occupational coherence, but, after representing two stories in this way, I realised that, in addition to being a time-consuming process, this resulted in little new understanding.

It also left me open to the criticism of over-layering my collaborators' stories with unnecessary levels of interpretation or 'interpretive distortion', a risk noted by Clandinin and Connelly, who cautioned that 'because data tend to carry with them the idea of objective representation of research experience, it is important to note how imbued field texts are with interpretation' (2000:93). This caution aptly recognises that the original field text, in my case the occupational transcript derived from the audio recording of my initial interview, already contains interpretations made by the research collaborator in response to my interview questions, without me adding a further layer of interpretation. As a consequence, I adapted my analysis to a simpler form of extracted artefact, which I labelled an 'occupational portrait' – this highlighted the principal occupational issues emerging and generated a platform for determining themes or what Riessman describes as 'theorizing across a number of cases' (2008:74). In terms of research progression, my exploratory journey had taken another detour or, in nautical terms, a tack, that is a change in direction from one position to another.

Co-constructing occupational stories

Co-construction is the process of creating a narrative jointly with another person: in my research the process of recounting an occupational narrative with an older professional practitioner and creating an auto/biographic insight that illuminates the practitioner's occupational history. This approach to occupational investigation is different to those encouraged by career advisers in the 20th century where instrumentation – the design and use of structured questionnaires and inventories – promoted occupational exploration by helping career actors to locate, interpret and understand their career preferences, thereby enabling them to make informed career choices. These traditional approaches included 'trait based' matching e.g. Holland's Vocational Personality Type (Sharf 2006:91) and 'career decisions based on life stage' e.g. Super's Life Stage Model (Sharf, 2006:210), but in these approaches occupational navigation is determined by psychological interpretation and centred around prescriptive approaches to locating career. Whereas these approaches satisfy a preference for a rational scientific approach that can be measured to confirm position/role suitability – post modern career theory, emerging from the latter part of the 20th century, recognises and reflects concepts of opportunity and interaction. These contemporary approaches encourage an emerging disposition for social learning approaches that can be interpreted to extract meaning – Savickas et al argue that career counsellors should:

...focus on client's ongoing construction and re-construction of subjective and multiple realities.

Rather than relying on group norms and abstract terms, they should engage in activities and meaning-making that enables them to build some new view of themselves (2009:243).

The auto/biographic narrative genre is an approach that supports Savickas et al's commendation that enable a person '... to build some new view of themselves' (2009:243). However, for most practising professionals the opportunity to recollect a narrative account is restricted due to time availability and the ability to create such an occupational artefact. The process of co-construction enables the career actor to engage in authoring their occupational text by extracting and interrogating their career with the support of a partner, in this instance myself as the career researcher.

Conclusion: adapting to survive

For many older workers, adaptation is an emerging requirement in an occupational world continually battered by the global imperatives of product improvement, technological synergy and financial efficiency, resulting in the ever-increasing fragility of the concept of career in post modernist times. This is no less an issue for professional practitioners who, despite their foundations of professional qualification and credibility, find that their organisations are also likely to face the challenges encountered by all businesses operating globally. As a consequence, the occupational reality is that, like Jack and Ann, most professional practitioners' career journey is or will become predicated by ambiguity and uncertainty over a career life-time. The constant need for all workers, but particularly older ones affected by the ever present, but masked, attitudes towards age discrimination, is to accommodate their changing employment opportunities. The auto/biographic approach is a valuable and innovative way for third-age professional workers in the knowledge economy to explore career options by enabling career comprehension (what has been) and career projection (what might be). It also supports occupational transitions by enabling the older professional practitioner to embrace their career history, however fragmentary, shape meaning from apparently disconnected episodes and accommodate lifestyle choices and obligations as they approach occupational disengagement.

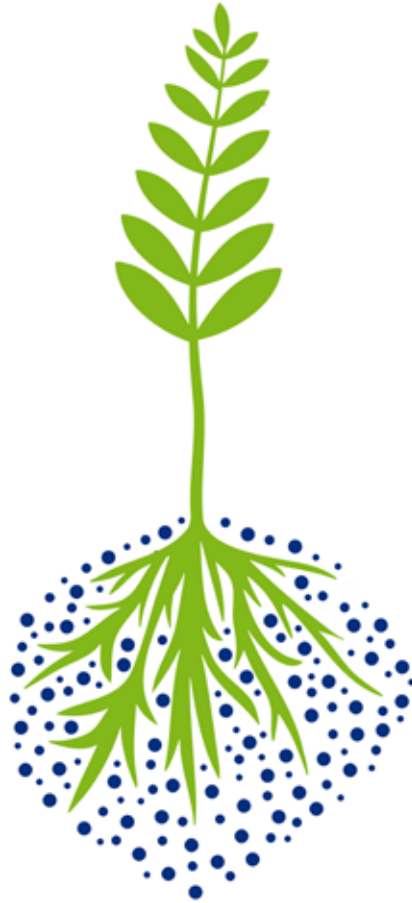
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