NICEC
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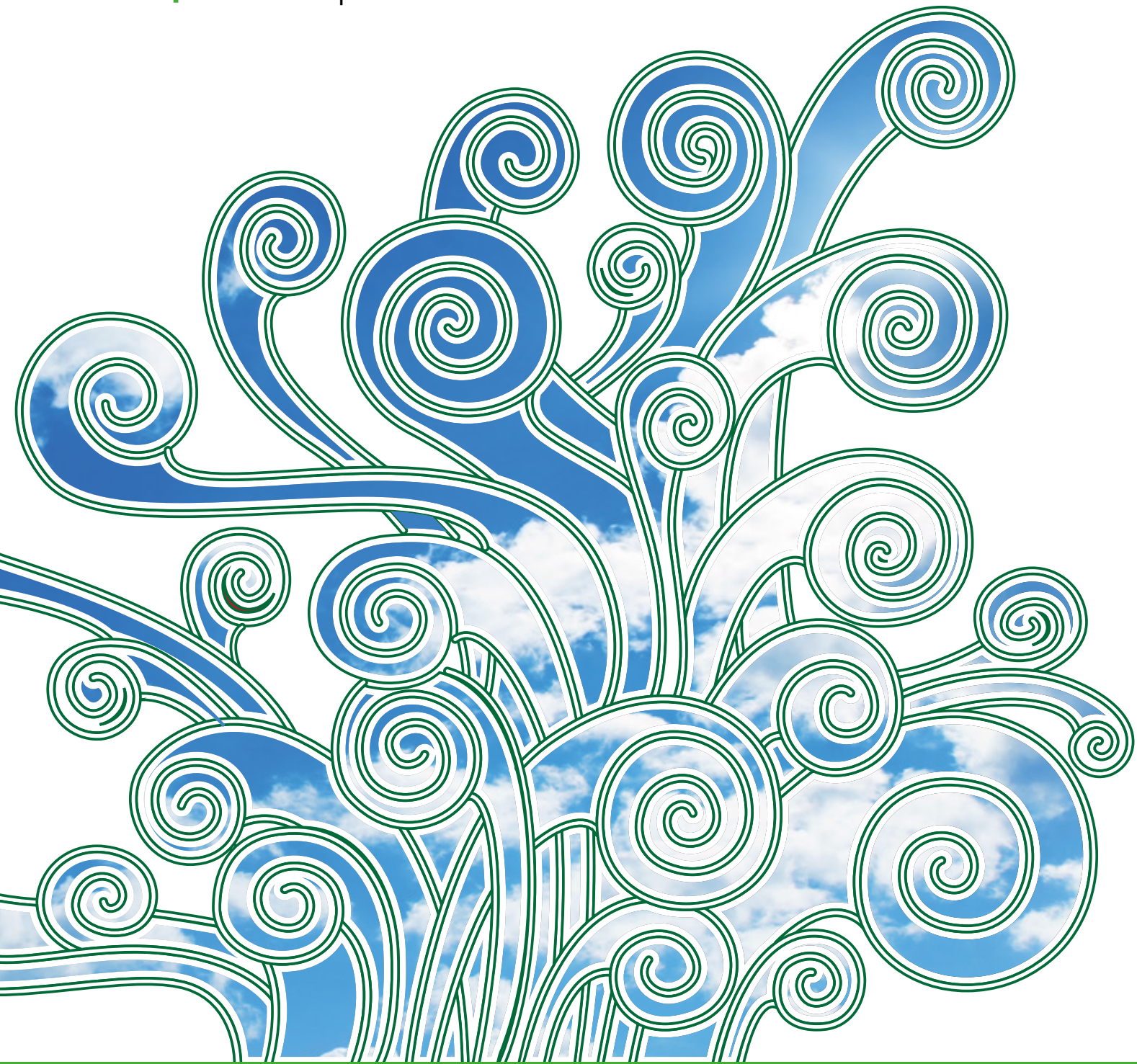

Promoting research and reflective practice in career development

NICEC

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

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'The National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC) was originally founded as a research institute in 1975. It now plays the role of a learned society for reflective practitioners in the broad field of career education, career guidance/counselling and career development. This includes individuals whose primary role relates to research, policy, consultancy, scholarship, service delivery or management. NICEC seeks to foster dialogue and innovation between these areas through events, networking, publications and projects.

NICEC is distinctive as a boundary-crossing network devoted to career education and counselling in education, in the workplace, and in the wider community. It seeks to integrate theory and practice in career development, stimulate intellectual diversity and encourage transdisciplinary dialogue. Through these activities, NICEC aims to develop research, inform policy and enhance service delivery.

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

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It is designed to be read by individuals who are involved in career development-related work in a wide range of settings including information, advice, counselling, guidance, advocacy, coaching, mentoring, psychotherapy, education, teaching, training, scholarship, research, consultancy, human resources, management or policy. The journal has a national and international readership.

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Editorial

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Special issue: Disciplinary perspectives in career development

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Introduction

We are pleased to introduce you to this special issue of the *Journal of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling* on disciplinary perspectives on career development. We have been inspired to put together this special issue by conversations between ourselves and other scholars of career studies about the value of different disciplinary perspectives on the topic of career. Career studies is necessarily an interdisciplinary field, drawing particularly from the disciplines of psychology and sociology, but increasingly incorporating scholarship from across other disciplines too. However explicit consideration of the interdisciplinary nature of career studies has often been limited. This is something we wish to address in this special edition.

Academic disciplines both enable and limit our insight into an object of study. They bring theories, methods, and a body of knowledge that provide understandings which would be impossible without their unique world view. They also bring assumptions, preoccupations, and boundaries that can make some issues or concerns invisible. We believe that the multidisciplinarity of career studies can be both a strength and a weakness. It can be a strength in the diversity of perspectives, methods, and understandings that as scholars and practitioners we can draw on and learn from; but it can be a weakness if we do not develop the tools, interests and capacities to facilitate dialogue across disciplinary boundaries.

In this editorial we aim to provide an overview of some key disciplinary perspectives on career studies by way of introduction to the papers in this journal. Each of the papers then offers a variety of insights into career and career development from different disciplinary perspectives. Through the editorial and the papers that follow we hope to stimulate new conversations about the relationship between the study of career and academic disciplines, and thereby to also open up new considerations for careers practice.

Single disciplinary perspectives and their emergence in the history of career development

Career studies has a long history within different disciplines. In this editorial we sketch out some of the key disciplinary perspectives on 'career', and their origins and implications for the field.

Psychology

Arguably psychology is the dominant academic discipline in the study of career development. Its relationship to the field dates almost to the beginning of the vocational guidance movement in the early years of the 20th century. Approaches to support vocational choice was one of the first applications of applied psychology.

It was differential psychology, and its associated psychometric assessment approaches that provided the technology underpinning matching approaches to vocational guidance. This is a tradition that persists to the present day. However, other topics of study within psychology have been salient at different points in time. Counselling became influential in career guidance in the UK by the early 1970s. This continues to be a major focus for academic inquiry into careers work. By the 1990s organisational behaviour became a location for the study of managerial and professional careers within large employers.

Psychology is a large discipline, and it could be understood in terms of sub-disciplines. But it is also a profession with specialist training and qualification routes, and these constructs partially overlap. In the UK we might identify relevant sub-disciplines around counselling psychology, and occupational and organisational psychology. More recently the emergence of coaching psychology has adapted counselling thinking for a non-clinical setting. The logic of sub-disciplines and professional structures does not necessarily cross international boundaries. In the USA, the most prolific source of psychology for career development, the category of vocational psychology encompasses both counselling and occupational perspectives. There is also a substantial and distinct body of work on managerial and professional careers produced by business psychologists. Collin and Patton (2000) characterise the study of career as a conversation between two dominant positions: vocational psychology and organisational studies. However, a case can be made that these represent two distinct traditions in the literature with limited dialogue between them, indeed Healy, Hammer & McIlveen (2022) found that this divide translated into a split between a career development and a graduate employability literature in the higher education sector.

Sociology

Arguably the formal study of career originates in the discipline of sociology in Chicago in the early 20th Century. The contribution of sociology to our understanding of career in the UK had become substantial by the 1970s. It is second only to psychology in the scale of its influence on career development thinking. In addition to an early focus on the sociology of work, educational sociologists have made a major contribution. The transitions from youth to adulthood and from education to employment have become an international object of study.

It has been sociology that has provided the intellectual underpinning for the focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion in the career development profession. This has been through foregrounding structural factors in careers notably socio- economic status and local labour markets (Roberts e.g 2005). It has also come from feminist perspectives, translated into considerations for career development practice by Bimrose (e.g. 2001).

A useful overview of the contribution of sociology to the field is provided by Bimrose (2019).

Education

A distinctive feature of the British contribution to career development has been an educational perspective, which perhaps became important in the 1970s and 1980s. This contribution has often come from NICEC Fellows, and is evident in the back catalogue of this Journal. Educational perspectives put the concept of learning as centre stage. Here the work of Bill Law has been particularly influential – an archive of his extensive body of work is now being developed on the NICEC Website: www.nicec.org

Economics

Economics has been relevant to career largely through its sub-discipline of labour market economics. Whilst it has been on the scene for a long time, improved accessible of digital labour market data and analysis has meant its influence has increased since the turn of the millennium. The usefulness of this to practice is contested (e.g. Alexander, 2023).

Policy studies

Although the earliest public policy relating to vocational guidance dates to 1910, policy studies did not enter the arena of career development scholarship until the mid-1990s. At this stage we see influential work such as Watts (1996), and the creation of the International Centre for Career Development in Public Policy.

Neglected disciplines

Despite career studies incorporating a wide range of different disciplinary perspectives we would argue that there are a number of academic disciplines which have great potential, but have not yet been fully deployed in the study of career and career development.

Some of these disciplines are featured in this issue. They include geography, philosophy, and media studies. Other disciplines that merit serious consideration include information science, which was addressed by Milosheva et al (2022) writing in this Journal. The study of health, particularly public health and mental health can also intersect with career (e.g. Robertson, 2013; 2014). Anthropology represents another neglected but valuable perspective, with cultural insights to offer, for example on the transition from childhood to adulthood.

In addition to neglected disciplines, there are also neglected corners of disciplines that are already engaged with the career development space. For example, educational psychology, and economic psychology.

Interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity: When disciplines are in dialogue

In the introduction to this editorial, we suggested that career studies is necessarily an interdisciplinary field. However disciplinary boundaries are not necessarily rigid. A discipline represents a cluster of theoretical perspectives, research methods, a body of literature, and a distinctive tradition of thought that is passed on by teaching. Research methods and philosophies are often shared between social science disciplines. To some extent theoretical concepts from one field can also be imported into another. Indeed, the boundaries between some social sciences are very permeable. Policy studies, education, labour market economics, and employment studies are multidisciplinary in nature and partially overlapping when they address issues such as skills and careers. Arguably, psychology tends to try harder to maintain a distinct identity from the other social sciences. In a sense a discipline represents an academic community, and communities may vary in how energetically they maintain their traditions and their boundaries.

Here it is useful to distinguish between interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity but, as Collin (2009) points out, the distinctions between them are blurred and definitions may not be shared. She also suggests that although there have been calls for interdisciplinarity in the study of career, there has been little action. However, McCash et al (2020) clearly identify career development as a transdisciplinary field. From this perspective the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Career (and career development interventions) represent a field of study that provides a central integrating focus for diverse perspectives, and – at least to some extent – scholarship which can transcend disciplinary boundaries. This latter position is close to our own.

A time and a place for disciplinary dialogue

To some extent telling the story of disciplinary perspectives is to recount the history of the study of careers and career development. Traditions emerge, become influential, and then are partially sidelined by new perspectives – but they rarely disappear. With the possible exception of psycho-dynamic perspectives on career choice, few perspectives have exited the stage. Although the field of career studies arguably originated in the disciplines of psychology and sociology, as we have demonstrated there is a growing diversity of disciplinary perspectives on career, and emerging new disciplinary perspectives. This, we would suggest makes now a good time to surface and explore disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity as relevant concepts in progressing the field of career studies.

At the same time a growing international and transnational literature on career is also raising the importance of considering disciplinarity. In different parts of the world, the study of careers has often been approached from different disciplines. In particular there appear to be trans-Atlantic differences, with a stronger tradition of research from the discipline of psychology in the USA. That said, in recent years the field of vocational psychology has become more permeable to socio-economic and political perspectives, and expanded to include content more often associated with other social sciences. This is evident in the work of Blustein (e.g. 2006).

In Europe in general, and the UK in particular, the study of career has been more a multidisciplinary endeavour, with sociology and education having a voice. The multi-lingual nature of Europe and its cultural, political, and economic diversity is both a barrier to the sharing of knowledge and a fertile ground for different disciplinary perspectives (Khapova et al., 2009).

Conclusion

Career studies is a transdisciplinary field: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Many disciplinary perspectives are valid, but some promising ones are under-developed. Perspectives evolve over time and there are national differences.

Several disciplines are better for describing careers than they are at informing career interventions. But even where disciplines do not provide explicit recipes for the design of career services, they may help us to think radically differently about the nature of careers, and from that new ways of working may emerge.

New thinking is welcome in this Journal. We hope this selection of articles inspires you to reflect on the disciplinary perspectives you bring to this project.

In this issue

Phil McCash takes us back to the origin of career studies by exploring the enduring legacy of the Chicago School of sociology on our field. He argues their interactionist perspective helps to integrate the study of careers.

Natalia Veles and Sujin Kim explore the sociology of the 'third space'. This approach brings together cultural sociology with a systems perspective on career development.

Ghazal Vahidi, Sarah Barnard, and John Arnold introduce us to media studies as a new discipline with much to offer the study of the discourse surrounding careers.

Robin Stevens demonstrates how philosophy can inform how we will live our life/career - and help others to do so - using existential perspectives as way to illustrate this.

Rosie Alexander outlines what social geography has to offer, and the value and influence of spatial understandings of career.

Gill Frigerio provides a way of thinking about collaboration between disciplines in career development, and explores how this connects to pedagogy in the training of career development practitioners.

However, we must open this special issue on a sad note, with a stand-alone commemorative article. **Tristram Hooley, Rie Thomsen and Manwel DeBono** give

us an insight into the contribution of Professor Ronald Sultana of the University of Malta, who passed away towards the end of 2023. His contribution to the field was rooted in educational sociology, but expanded to comparative international policy studies. He led landmark studies of career development provision in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. His work was influenced by a concern for social justice, and he brought a strong critical perspective to his writing. To the NICEC Fellows who worked with him, he was a kind and generous collaborator. This Journal could not let his passing go without a prominent recognition of his widely influential body of work.

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Article

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A legacy of solidaric critique and hope for a better world: A meditation on the scholarly contribution of Ronald Sultana

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Abstract

In this article, we reflect on the legacy of Ronald Sultana who died on Friday 24th November 2023. We argue that he was a major figure in the development of career guidance theory and practice of the late 20th and early 21st century. The article begins by reflecting on and summarising his contribution to the fields of education and career guidance. While we focus on his contribution in the field of career guidance, we also acknowledge that this work sits in a wider body of work in which Sultana's sociological imagination addressed the operation of the education system around the Mediterranean, across Europe and in the Global South. We explore Sultana's contribution to theory, policy and practice. We argue that in relation to theory he situated careers in context, carefully traced the range of political roles that career guidance could play and argued for career guidance as a force for social justice. In relation to policy, we highlight his role in international reviews and his critical commentary on this kind of policy borrowing and lending. In relation to practice, we focus on Sultana's development of resources and study programmes promoting lifelong guidance, and the leveraging of networking to develop a united community of professionals. Finally, we consider the challenges that Ronald left for us and discuss what those who seek to build on his legacy could do.

Keywords: Social justice; educational sociology; comparative policy.

Introduction

> As we peer through the tunnel of the future – darker than it has perhaps been for decades – we might wish to go back to the past, before the pandemic turned our lives upside down. We might be hankering for the normal, the way things were. And yet, if we are indeed to weave together a life worth living, then nothing better than the words of the poet Sonya Renée Taylor to express my thoughts and feelings today… and it is with her words that I'd like to conclude:
>
> > We will not go back to normal.
> > Normal never was.
> > Our pre-Corona existence was not normal
> > other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion,
> > depletion, extraction, disconnection, rage, hoarding, hate and lack.
> > We should not long to return to the old 'normal'.
> > At present, we are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment.
> > One that fits all of humanity and nature.
>
> (Sultana, 2021c, The Honoris Causa ceremony, Université Laval in Québec, Canada)

There are few, if any, other educational scholars that have left such a mark on the field of career guidance research as Ronald Sultana. Sultana made significant contributions that shaped theory, policy and practice within the field of education in general and in career guidance in particular. He passed away suddenly on 24 November 2023 at the age of 65 and left behind a legacy of ideas that will continue to influence research in comparative educational and career guidance policy for future generations.

While this article unpacks the central elements of Sultana's work it can never do justice to the many articles, books, book chapters blog posts and even creative pieces that he produced in a lifetime. We hope that this article will inspire the reader to delve into the parts of his work that connect most with your thoughts at this moment. We write it as Ronald's friends, colleagues and mentees who have had the opportunity to benefit from his thinking, writing and guidance over the years and now attempt to present some of his key ideas, so that others can continue to learn from him.

Sultana's work had a global impact and has been translated into several languages. He described his own contribution and approach as follows:

> The field in which I flourished as an academic is education, a broad enough area that allowed me to 'husband' three related garden patches, namely [1] the links between education, work and employment [2] teacher education, and [3] comparative education. All my work in these three areas is informed by an engagement with sociology (and in particular critical social theory), and to some extent with philosophy, economics, history, and psychology, an interest that flows naturally from attempts to understand the interactions between individuals and society, and between agency and structure in particular historical conjunctures.
>
> (Sultana, 2021a, p.83)

Within these 'garden patches' we want to focus especially on his interests in the links between education and work, particularly through his engagement in careers education and guidance and to reflect on his commitment to contextualised and comparative perspectives and his underlying passion for social justice.

Sultana was very productive and enjoyed writing, almost to the same extent as Baumann (2012) who wrote in his book *This is not a diary* that 'a day without scribbling feels like a day wasted or criminally aborted, a duty neglected, a calling betrayed' (p. 1). There was no doubt of Ronald's calling as a professor, scholar and mentor for research in education and career guidance. He was continuously critical, always insisting on a dialectical approach to the problems he scrutinised. This was often reflected in the titles of his writings: 'For a postcolonial turn in career guidance: The dialectic between universalisms and localisms' (Sultana, 2023a) and 'Lifelong career guidance: Between autonomy and solidarity' (Sultana, 2023b). He also enjoyed the play of words, this is evident from early on 'L-ghalliema, il-genituri u l-kunsilli ta' l-iskejjel: Pont fuq bahar li jaqsam?' (Teachers, parents and school councils: A bridge over a dividing sea? Our translation Sultana, 1994) and 'Underachievement: Are students failing school or are our schools failing students?' (Sultana, 1996). Sultana continued up until his passing to use the titles of his articles to make the reader reflect and think about his or her own position, often somewhat mischievously as in, 'Four "dirty words" in career guidance: From common sense to good sense' (Sultana, 2022a).

Sultana wanted his readers, educators and indeed everyone to take a stance, show their convictions and, stand up for what they believed in. He was very clear about his convictions but remained open to the ideas and positions of others. His scholarly and pedagogic endeavor was non-dogmatic, curious and critical, and he was often able to bring together different perspectives and traditions to create new and productive syntheses. The only thing that he would not accept in his scholarship would be the idea of no position or supposed neutrality ('it is the worst that lack all conviction', Sultana, 2017a, p.313). His way of living and working was encapsulated by his belief that 'one never "arrives" or wins on all fronts, but one is always striving to understand, reach out, improve' (Sultana, 2022b).

Sultana's commitment to critical social theory meant that he was committed to building a radical imaginary, addressing the use of power, unmasking ideology, viewing the individual as existing in a dialectical relationship with their context and recognising that human beings have a bounded but transformative capacity for agency (Thomsen et al., 2022). These convictions ran through his work, which became increasingly critical, conceptual and theoretical as he moved through his career.

Career retrospective

Ronald Sultana was born in 1958 and grew up in a middle-class family in Naxxar, a small Maltese village. His youth involved active participation as an educator in a religious association, the Society of Christian Doctrine, which shaped his values and passion for teaching. Academically, he was outstanding, earning a first-class honours degree in English, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling with Distinction from the University of Reading, and a PhD in Educational Sociology from The University of Waikato, New Zealand, among other qualifications. His doctoral research, an ethnographic study focusing

on the transition from school to work, significantly influenced both the methodology and subject matter of his later research and academic pursuits (Sultana, 1987).

Sultana held the position of Professor of Comparative Education and Educational Sociology at the University of Malta and was attached to the Faculty of Education throughout his whole working life. Over a 35 year-period he became a cornerstone of the Faculty not only through formal leadership positions, such as Head of Department and Dean, but also as an unofficial counsellor to both fellow scholars and students. His office was described by a colleague as the 'refugio peccatorum' (the refuge of sinners). He educated several generations of teachers, and his numerous books and papers are basic readings in various education and sociology courses.

Sultana was also the Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research (EMCER), which he founded in 2003. Through EMCER, he pioneered a Master of Arts programme in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies and managed the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* that promoted knowledge sharing in the region. The Journal eventually transitioned into a book series. In 2006, he launched a Master's programme in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development in collaboration with the Centre for Labour Studies, which has been used as an example of good practice internationally.

Ronald Sultana, though left-leaning, did not align strictly with the policies or theories of any single party or faction. Remarkably, his most significant contributions to national policy in Malta were made during the 1990s and early 2000s under centre-right governments. He often worked behind the scenes on key initiatives like the establishment of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Malta's primary TVET institution, as well as public school reforms (Wain et al., 1995). He also played a pivotal role in the development of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) subject in compulsory education (Sultana, 1992) and the national career guidance policy for schools (Debono et al., 2007). In Malta's career guidance field, Sultana assisted in founding the Malta Career Guidance Association and actively supported its activities over the years. He established a Guidance Forum, participated in national conferences, engaged in continuous professional development for practitioners, and consistently shared career guidance insights to enhance the skills of those in the field.

However, Ronald Sultana's influence reached far beyond his university and national boundaries. A prolific researcher and author, he edited and co-edited 40 volumes, and wrote over 120 peer-reviewed research papers and chapters (Calleja, 2023). As discussed earlier, he categorised his research into three main strands: the links between education, work, and employment; teacher education; and comparative education (Sultana, 2021a). This expansive focus stemmed from the necessity for academics in smaller countries like Malta to engage with a broad range of subjects. Although this approach presented challenges, Sultana recognised and embraced the advantages of a wide-ranging academic background. It enabled him to master various technical languages, forge diverse connections, and gain novel insights (Sultana, 2021a). Significantly, these three research strands often intersected and enriched each other.

Sultana's research was consistently informed by his commitment to a comparative perspective and a deep-seated drive for social justice. His work often delved into themes

like neoliberal oppression, the north-south divide, and the politics of emancipation (e.g., Hooley et al., 2018, 2019; Sultana, 2011, 2014a, 2017b). Always self-reflective, he was particularly concerned with the role of experts like himself, who acted as 'boundary persons', mediating policy lending and borrowing between countries (Sultana, 2011).

Throughout his career, Sultana's writing prowess was inextricably linked to his personal influence. Known for his eloquence, playful wit, deep expertise, and intellectual humility, he captivated audiences at conferences worldwide. This charm and skill not only resonated with his listeners but also opened doors to numerous collaborations on international research and policy projects including work with a variety of prestigious international organisations (Sultana, 2021a).

Sultana published many significant contributions about educational policy focusing on various Mediterranean and Arab countries and territories (e.g. Mazawi & Sultana, 2010; Sultana 2002, 2008). This included work which looked at: the quality of education in the Euro-Mediterranean region (Sultana, 2016); the struggles for democracy through education in the region (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010); gathering comparative educational research in the Mediterranean (Sultana & Buhagiar, 2021); 'authentic education' that encourages students to 'comprehend, challenge, and contest' (Sultana, 2021b); the problematic issue of private tutoring (Bray et al., 2013); as well as a focus on specific initiatives such as early childhood development in Jordan, and girls' education in Egypt (Sultana, 2009a); analysing vocational school reforms in Albania, Kosovo and Turkey and so on (Sultana, 2008). Most recently he edited a volume exploring the influence, and relevance, of Dewey to Mediterranean education (Striano & Sultana, 2022)

But he will arguably be mostly remembered for his work on the transitions between learning and work, and on careers education and guidance which included important contributions to theory, policy and practice in Malta, Europe and the wider Mediterranean region, and the world. Ronald Sultana worked in tens of countries and contributed reports for all the major international bodies involved in career guidance. He was also a member of the editorial board of several international journals, including the *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, and held the position of International Fellow at the *National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* (NICEC) in the UK.

In 2021, Sultana received an Honorary Doctorate from Université Laval in Québec, Canada. In 2023, he was honoured with the ESVDC 2023 Distinguished Scholar Award by the European Society for Vocational Design and Career Counselling. These honours recognised his innovative contributions to career guidance theory and practice, notably his focus on social justice and equity.

His contribution to career studies

Sultana described his area of interest as the links between 'education, work and employment' and as the associated 'interactions between individuals and society, and between agency and structure in particular historical conjunctures' (Sultana, 2021a, p.83). He was fond of troubling concepts like 'career' and 'career guidance' noting that such terms are 'quite distant from the kind of modest occupations the vast majority of "common"

people in the global South are involved in' (Sultana, 2017b, p.9). As a result, he toyed with alternative language and ways of describing this activity such as 'livelihood planning' or 'authentic education for meaningful work' (Sultana, 2017b; 2021b). These were not merely academic language games, but rather a deep concern about the relevance of his key concepts to those outside of the global elites, and a critical engagement with the normative values and ideologies that such terms carried. Sultana always remembered that the Global North represented a minority of the world's population and asked whether models for research, theory, policy and practice were mindful of the broader global context.

Yet, he did come back, time and again to the concept of 'career' pairing it variously with 'guidance', 'education', 'development' and other terms. Ultimately, he preferred to trouble the terminology than abandon it. He drew attention to the multiple rationalities that inform career guidance in many places and sought to redefine and reorientate the activity around more emancipatory definitions. In his book on career guidance in the Mediterranean he proposed a definition of career guidance as:

> A dialogic, mutually pedagogical relationship, that serves to conscientise individuals and groups about the social forces that define the world of work and affect the range of opportunities available to them, while at the same time equipping them with the political skills, networks, community resources, values and dispositions to struggle for social and work arrangements that are equitable and just, where one's development and self-fulfilment advances the development and fulfilment of others.
>
> (Sultana, 2017b, p.11)

This was then built on in a subsequent book on career guidance and social justice which added the important ideas that career guidance should be about empowering people to 'imagine the world as it could be', 'build solidarity' and 'take both individual and collective action' (Hooley et al., 2018, p.20). In this he drew directly on key ideas that had influenced his thinking throughout his career like Mills' (1959) concept of the 'sociological imagination' and the critical pedagogy tradition which flowed through Freire (1970), Giroux (1988) and Simon (Dippo et al., 1991; Simon, 2009) amongst others. This kind of deep engagement with sociology and critical theory remains unusual within the career guidance field although such intellectual resources may be becoming more influential, at least in part due to the efforts of Sultana.

Contributions to career theory

Sultana's theoretical contribution to the field of career guidance is threefold. Firstly, he argued, as other sociologically minded theorists have before him, that both careers and career guidance unfold within a context, with Sultana particularly minded to view this idea of context through a geo-political lens that often serves to reframe the opportunity structures of any particularly (Global North) country. Secondly, he carefully traced the myriad of roles that career guidance can play, showing how its practice is enmeshed in wider ideologies and structures of power. And, thirdly, he argued that career guidance has the potential to be an emancipatory form of education, both helping individuals to find new horizons and providing them with tools through which they can act on and diminish inequalities in their societies. Sultana's work on bringing the context of career and career

guidance to the forefront of theorising is critical. His aim was 'to develop theoretically informed accounts of the field as it is conceived and practised in context' (Sultana, 2017b, p. 3). Careers are not something that happens in abstract globalised spaces, what Arthur and Rousseau (2001) celebrated as 'the boundaryless career'. Instead, careers are rooted in spaces, places politics and culture. 'Contexts matter' Sultana argues, and not just to what jobs one might do, but also to what it is possible to think and dream. Careers in North Africa are different from those in Germany, because of the large informal labour market, the cultural and religious fatalism of the population, and the enormous inequality (Sultana, 2017b). Without a deep understanding of context, we cannot 'understand the extent to which our theories, with their universalising tendencies, are both plain wrong, and equally, plainly dangerous' (Sultana, 2018a, p.49).

He recounted a story of travelling on a train from Casablanca to Rabat and overhearing a holidaying British couple reflecting on the 'career choices' of an eight-year-old shoeshine boy (Sultana, 2017b). The anecdote serves to illustrate the vast gulf that exists between the habitus of the British couple, to whom concepts like vocational choice and agency are central, and the shoeshine boy to whom choices have never been afforded. Context is not merely about politics, wealth, class, culture or place, but a dynamic mix of all of these which means that any career theory has to come up with serious answers to questions about who the theory is useful for, in what circumstances and under what conditions. So, Sultana's theorisation of 'chameleon careers' which he built from his own experience of careering in Malta, as well as interviews in other small states, was advanced as a particular career formation which emerged in a particular political economy, rather than as a universal truth that could be extrapolated from his own experience to all contexts (Sultana, 2010).

Just, as context matters for the development of careers, it also shapes both how career guidance works as we will discuss further in the sections on policy and practice. Sultana remained sceptical about attempts to transplant forms of career guidance from one context into another, without attention to the context, and was fond of quoting Sadler's (1900) dictum about the frequent failure of attempts to borrow educational policies and approaches, rephrasing it optimistically as follows:

> Of course, one cannot take a flower from the mountains and plant it in Malta, in the hope that it will flourish in our arid clime… but knowing that others have found ways of making flowers bloom irrespective of season should at least challenge our complacency: education can be and should be both a heritage and a portal for all, not just a few.
>
> (Sultana, 2022b)

Career guidance, Sultana would always remind us, is not a neutral tool which we can simply apply to anywhere. It is a practice that we must remake in different contexts. Furthermore, career guidance is not just one thing done for one person or purpose, but rather 'can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions' (Hooley et al., 2018, p.20) and which is deployed for a wide range of political and ideological purposes which Sultana (2014a) summarised as technocratic, developmental and emancipatory rationalities. Guidance has a 'dark side' and can end up having 'reproductive rather than transformative or emancipatory outcomes' often through the way that it

shapes possibilities and accommodates people to the opportunity structure (Sultana, 2014a, p.18). Sultana goes on to ask 'in which way/s does career education and guidance participate in the deployment of power, and on whose behalf, towards which ends?' and providing the somewhat gloomy answer that 'here one may be tempted to come to a simple, but probably simplistic conclusion, namely that career education and guidance, as an institutionalised social practice, will tend to be reproductive' (p.19). In this dialogue he recognises the way in which career guidance is embedded within wider processes of politics, policy and ideology and how any theories or readings of its value, impact and potential need to be grounded in this kind of analysis of the context of practice. Career guidance is delivered in schools, universities and public employment services and funded by politicians to achieve particular aims. It is only through understanding this contextualised practice that we can formulate meaningful and usable theories.

However, the gloomy recognition that career guidance is often in the service of technocratic politicians pursuing often questionable policy aims, is not the whole story. Throughout his work, but especially following the publication of three hard hitting papers in 2014: 'Rousseau's chains: Striving for greater social justice through emancipatory career guidance'; 'Career guidance for social justice in neoliberal times; and 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will?'; 'Troubling the relationship between career guidance and social justice' (Sultana, 2014a, b, & c), he argued that career guidance was not simply a technology for social control, but rather could be co-opted into an emancipatory project for liberation. These ideas were explored through a special issue of the NICEC Journal (Hooley & Sultana, 2016) and two edited volumes (Hooley et al., 2018, 2019). Building on these focused contributions he pursued the fight for social justice pluralistically in relation to the experience of multi-cultural societies (Sultana, 2017c), migrants and refugees in the labour market (Fejes et al., 2022) whilst arguing for a post-colonial turn (Sultana, 2023a) and opposing neo-liberalism and austerity (Sultana, 2018c). He also began the process of developing new models of practice (Hooley et al., 2021) and re-engineering the language of career guidance to empty it of neoliberal assumptions (Sultana, 2022a). This work in theorising career guidance as an emancipatory force clearly stands as one of Sultana's greatest theoretical contributions to the field.

Contributions to policy

As already discussed above, Sultana played important roles in the politics and policy of career guidance in his native Malta from the 1990s. But from the early 2000s he began to contribute to a series of international reviews of career guidance that fed into 'the most detailed comparable database on career guidance that has ever been produced' (Sultana, 2017b, pp.3-4).

As a policy expert he undertook comparative work for major organisations such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the European Union (EU), the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF). These reviews resulted in several technical and policy reports focusing on career guidance in Europe (Sultana, 2004; Sultana & Watts, 2006), in small states (Sultana, 2006) in the Mediterranean Region (Sultana & Watts, 2007), and addressing key issues such as the development of career management

skills and flexicurity (Sultana, 2012). *Career guidance: A handbook for guidance policy-makers* (Watts & Sultana, 2004), also based on such reviews, proved to be an important resource for policy makers across the world and was translated into several languages. The whole project of completing these international reviews 'led to opportunities for policy lending and policy borrowing on an unprecedented scale' (Sultana, 2009b).

Despite growing doubts about these kinds of international policy borrowing and lending roles, Sultana continued to engage in these studies almost until the end of his life, with a review of 'career development support systems in the Western Balkans' completed in 2022 (Sultana, 2022c). Optimistically, Sultana hoped that such processes could foster mutual understanding, learning and development. Yet, ever reflective, he also articulated his doubts about both the process of many of these reviews, particularly the imperialist undertones of experts travelling from the most developed countries to opine on those that were judged as 'in need'. He critiqued the normative and universalising approaches to policy and practice development that the reviews tended to produce and outlined concerns that the process of policy borrowing and lending tended to benefit the lender more than the borrower. He wrote of his feelings about the ethical and epistemological responsibilities that he carried in the role of 'boundary person', mediating between the global and the local (Sultana, 2011).

> What on earth are we trying to do here? Are we pushing a practice that has little if any cultural and social anchorage, particularly among the poorer sections of the population that, incidentally, make up the vast majority in both the urban and rural areas? To what extent is career guidance at all meaningful – or appropriate?
>
> (Sultana, 2011, p.276)

Once again, the centrality of context comes through in Sultana's work. In dialogue with Marcelo Ribeiro, a colleague in Brazil, and increasingly influenced by theorists Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Raewyn Connell (2007) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006), Sultana conceptualised these as epistemic problems in which local approaches to knowing and doing must be respected (Sultana, 2018a). This does not mean that there is nothing to be gained from policy borrowing and lending, but rather that if such work is to be successful it needs to open up 'discursive spaces that bridge current global divides and inequities in the production of knowledge' and amplify 'multiple voices, by accommodating indigenous practices' rather than serve as a process of transmission from the Global North to the Global South (Sultana, 2018a, p.50).

Contributions to practice

Sultana's engagement in comparative research and policy on career guidance heightened his awareness of the disparities in the quality of career guidance practices, not just among countries but also within different institutions in the same country. Recognising the need to enhance the capabilities of career practitioners, he collaborated on international projects through ERASMUS+ to develop valuable resources, such as *Enhancing the quality of career guidance in secondary schools: A handbook* (Sultana, 2018b).

Understanding that robust career guidance education programmes are crucial for the field's professionalisation, Sultana dedicated considerable time and effort to training career

guidance practitioners both in Malta and internationally. He co-founded an open-course on career guidance and social justice offered as part of the Nordic-Baltic VALA network and in recent years, supported education authorities in Cyprus, Slovenia, Scotland, Egypt, Palestine, and the Faroe Islands in developing career education programmes.

Sultana (2018b) advocated for the formation of well-rounded professionals or 'reflective practitioners', a concept adopted from Schön (1983). He believed this could be achieved by fostering a combination of knowledge ('*savoir*'), skills and competencies ('*savoir faire*'), and personal and professional demeanor ('*savoir être*'). Perhaps noting a general undervaluation of the latter aspect in career guidance programmes, he emphasised it in his teachings, including the importance of professional ethics. Sultana also explored creative avenues in conveying his message. He crafted a visual meditation titled 'A Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion' (Sultana 2021d) to accompany a manifesto for inclusion, encapsulating ideas and proposals contributed by over 600 academics and practitioners from across the globe (Sultana 2017a).

Sultana firmly believed that an effective career guidance system must address individuals' lifelong guidance needs, seeking to integrate services both within and outside educational systems. Towards this aim, he advocated for holistic career guidance programmes that adopt a lifelong and lifewide perspective on career development, engaging practitioners from schools, public employment services, and adult career guidance providers to study together. This interaction was intended to foster a shared set of values and vocabulary, important elements in the formation of a unified profession across the different roles of researchers, practitioners and policymakers. Sultana also acted as a supporting expert in the establishment of the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC) and ran a very memorable ECADOC summer school in Malta in 2019.

Furthermore, Sultana leveraged his network to enrich the field at gatherings, attended by scholars, students, practitioners, and various stakeholders, facilitating a cross-pollination of insights and practices. By encouraging diverse participation in educational and training events, ranging from formal university programmes to workshops and conferences, Sultana aimed to build a community of career guidance professionals equipped with a common understanding and commitment to lifelong career guidance and development.

What is to be done?

Ronald Sultana leaves a legacy of scholarship in education and career guidance and those who would like to honour his work are, in our view, given some significant signposts as to what to do next.

We would like to finish as we started, with Ronald's own words. In the quote that follows, Ronald reminds us that the purpose of academic work is not to offer a quick fix, but rather to foster reflexivity, ask difficult questions and offer a critical take on the common-sense assumptions of the world. From this we can draw five lessons from his thinking and writing to guide us as we move forwards. Firstly, to engage in continuous critical self-reflection. Secondly, to keep contextualising and analysing education and career guidance practices as they unfold in everyday life. Thirdly, to keep in view dimensions of power whether economic or cultural. Fourthly, to advocate for scholarship that transcends borders and boundaries,

whether they pertain to national borders or disciplinary divides within academia, and fifthly to continue with our collective endeavour to realise better, more inclusive, and more equitable societies.

> To provide policy directions now would be to foreclose analysis, and while it is vital that policy and research do not ignore each other, it is equally important that they are not collapsed into each other either. What I have tried to do in this paper is to 'claim sanctuary' by distancing myself a little from the urgency of the demands of policy and practice with their understandable concerns for prompt and immediate action in order to prise for myself some space for critical self-reflection
>
> (Sultana 2011, p.280).

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The Chicago School of Sociology and the origins of Career Studies

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Abstract

This article troubles the origin myth of career development centred on the vocational guidance movement. It draws attention to the early theorisation of career undertaken mainly, although not exclusively, within the pioneering Chicago School of Sociology in the early and middle part of the twentieth century. It is argued that this interactionist tradition within sociology gives the field of career development a coherence and integrity that might otherwise be missed. In addition, it is suggested that its underpinning philosophy is particularly suited to embracing theoretical innovation from other disciplines. The formal study of career starts in sociology, perhaps, but it continues to expand as a transdisciplinary field of enquiry.

Keywords: Career Studies; Career Theory; Interactionism; Sociology; Transdisciplinary

Introduction

This issue of the NICEC journal focusing on career development and disciplinary perspectives is very timely as it is now recognised that career studies has become a transdisciplinary field (Arthur et al., 1989a; Moore et al., 2007; Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018). There is a wide range of career development theories drawing from psychology, sociology, education, organisational studies, and other disciplines. This testifies to the existence of a vibrant and productive research culture, but it also poses challenges in terms of coherence and ease of use. The field is therefore witnessing a number of important attempts at taking an integrative approach to understanding career theory (for example, Gunz & Mayrhofer,

2018; McCash, 2021; Patton & McMahon, 2021; Savickas, 2021; Yates, 2021). These integrative approaches recognise that any one individual career theory is unequal to the task of fully understanding the richness and depth of career. In some respects, the field is experiencing something of an integrative turn, although, there have been several earlier contributions in this direction (for example, Savickas & Lent, 1994; Super, 1992).

Integration sounds like a neat solution but it poses its own set of problems and challenges. Questions arise as to how to 'do' integration and each approach attempts the task in subtly different ways. A key challenge is how to retain coherence, rigour, and intelligibility when integrating perspectives underpinned by quite markedly different philosophies.

To address this challenge, this article takes a deep dive into the intellectual history of the field and the birth of career studies in the pioneering Chicago School of Sociology in the early and middle part of the twentieth century. It starts by describing the background to the Chicago School and tracing the early intellectual influences on the interactionist philosophy that is closely associated with it. Five key contributions are then discussed in relation to career; namely, the work of: William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, Frances Donovan, Clifford Shaw, Everett Hughes, and Erving Goffman. Following this, it is shown that their interactionist conception of career has profoundly shaped contemporary career theory including the developmental, community interaction, careership, and career construction theories. This means that the field of career studies has an underlying coherence and rigour that may not be obvious at the surface level. Based on this solid foundation, the interactionist view of career is well-positioned to assimilate relevant concepts from other theories and disciplines. It therefore offers a rich way of understanding career that is valuable for the future of the academic field and the career development profession.

The Chicago School of Sociology

The 'Chicago School of Sociology' is a popular term for the Department of Sociology founded in 1892 at the University of Chicago, and the ideas or approaches associated with it. It was the first sociology department in the USA and became one of the leading centres in the world. The department took a particular interest in researching the city due to its location in Chicago, then a fast-growing city with a considerable immigrant population. It also benefitted from the work of the related School of Social Service Administration at the University which focused on training social workers and possessed deep knowledge of Chicago through fieldwork and detailed maps of the city and its constituent districts.

Two leading lights in the department in the period 1913-1934 were Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. They developed the initial intellectual frameworks that gave rise to the study of career in Chicago. In a paper on the contemporary city, Park (1915, pp. 610-612) argued, citing Freud, that the activities of work, sport, and play enable individuals to find symbolic expression for natural instincts and appetites. He stated, 'in the crowd…every moment may be said to be psychological' (p. 592). Cities were conceived as psycho-ecological phenomena consisting of moral regions and occupations where contrasting types of moral behaviour were either permitted or taboo. Following Simmel's (1908/1971) important essay on *The Stranger*, Park and Burgess argued that the study of delinquent or marginal careers, and those of other moral outcasts or strangers, lends insight to the processes of scapegoating and othering (1921, p. 559).

Intellectual background to interactionism

This section presents an outline of the intellectual background to the interactionist philosophy developed in Chicago. It focuses on the epistemology of Immanuel Kant and Max Weber; and the psychosocial theories of Georg Simmel, William James, and George Herbert Mead. For the purposes of this article, it is inevitably somewhat brief and much fuller accounts are provided by Rock (1979) and Bulmer (1984). Interactionism is used here as a general term to describe one of the main approaches relevant to the study of career developed at Chicago in this initial period. More specific, and perhaps better known, terms include symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), community interaction theory (Law, 1981, 2009), and cultural/critical interactionism (Jacobsen, 2019); however, these relate to later periods and/or authors from elsewhere.

Georg Simmel

Interactionism is informed by the social theory of Georg Simmel. Society, and its components, are seen as events that are produced through an ongoing process of social life termed sociation. Sociation arises when people meet each other and engage in mutually responsive behaviour. It is through apparently routine and ordinary phenomena, such as the career, that social life can be understood. In addition, Simmelian sociology is formalist as it focuses on the analysis of recurrent social processes called forms (Rock, 1979). In these terms, career is seen as relational, and always in movement, because sociation is an ongoing and dynamic social process. The study of career is also a comparative art as it entails identifying recurrent patterns, similarities, and differences.

Immanuel Kant and Max Weber

Interactionism draws from the Kantian view that all knowledge is mediated by forms of experience which shape what we can understand. This synthetic form of reasoning precludes understanding objects as they are independent of the perceiving mind. It is also influenced by Weber in denying the possibility of any overarching system or theory because reality is simply inexhaustible in its richness and denseness. It is held that theories must inevitably be incomplete, provisional, open, and consist of interpretations rather than the depiction of a purported objective reality (Rock, 1979). On this basis, theories of career must be similarly provisional, interpretive, and open-ended in nature.

William James and George Herbert Mead

Interactionism is also shaped by William James' theory of the self. The self is conceived in terms of two elements termed the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is the self that thinks, acts, and has experiences (the subjective self); whilst the 'Me' is the self as an object of knowledge, including the sum of a person's thoughts, feelings, social roles, and recognition from others (the objective self). Jamesian theory emphasises the dynamic and social nature of the self-concept. These ideas influenced George Herbert Mead, who worked in the philosophy department at Chicago, and further theorised the 'I' and the 'me'. Mead had a considerable influence on the sociology department and the later evolution of interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). James also emphasised the importance of understanding the meaning of other people's lives in order to ensure that our knowledge of the world is closely informed by how people experience it. He regarded the absence of this as

something of a blind spot in many approaches then current in academic research (Bulmer, 1984). On this basis, career is defined in terms of how the individual sees the world, the meaning they make of it, and their significant social roles and objects.

The above points may appear somewhat abstract, but they are relevant to understanding the underlying coherence of the interactionist world view and its importance for developing an integrative understanding of career. As will, hopefully, become apparent in the sections below, these aspects (sociation, comparison, interpretation, the self-concept, and the importance of meaning-making) permeate the study of career.

The study of career in the Chicago School of Sociology

Several researchers pioneered the study of career from the 1910s onwards and five significant examples are selected below. These studies often employed qualitative methods such as autobiography, life story, natural history, interview, and participant observation. These methods were selected in order to explore deeply the lifeworlds of participants.

William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki

The American sociologist William Thomas and the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki researched the lives of Polish immigrants to the United States and their families. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* published in five volumes between 1918 and 1920, is considered a landmark in sociology particularly in its range of data collection methods such as use of life history. For example, Volume 3 contains an autobiographical life story with accompanying commentary. In this volume, Thomas and Znaniecki (1919) pioneered the concept of the individual 'life organisation' (p. 25) consisting of the individual's 'methods of adaptation and control of the social meanings in a particular domain' (p. 25) and linked this to 'the individual's social career' (p. 25) and 'life career' (p. 34).

Frances Donovan

In her neglected classic, *The Woman Who Waits*, Frances Donovan (1920) wonders about the lives of women who work in Chicago's central business district known as 'the Loop'. The secretaries, stenographers, office executives, typists, sales staff, bundle wrappers, masseuses, chiropodists, and garment workers who make up the 'great army of women workers' (p. 8). She employs participant observation methods to research one of these workers, their reasons for entering their occupational line, and style of life. One day, when shopping in Chicago, she notices the many restaurants in that part of the city and the waitresses working within, "I found myself saying again and again. 'Why not find out about the waitress?' And then suddenly another idea came to me. 'Why not be a waitress?'" (p. 11). She contacts the US Department of Labour to find out what is already known, in official terms, about waitressing and is informed that there has been no research into this occupation.

> I merely wanted to see what other women, not in my world, were doing. I went on and explored until I felt that I had gone a long way. Then I sat down to try and give an account of what I had seen.
>
> (Donovan, 1920, pp. 12-13)

In Donovan's (1929) next book, *The Saleslady*, she presents a related but different set of motivations. Donovan reveals that she is working as a teacher in a public school for girls in Chicago. Every year, she talks with around 200 of these school-leavers about their career goals. Most of them seem to aspire to work as stenographers (short-hand typists) and executive secretaries and get married. She wonders why they do not consider alternative occupations and sectors such as retail buyer, but then checks herself, and questions her ability to discuss such options with the girls due to her own lack of knowledge. Again, she researches the available career information and concludes there is nothing that would be accessible and useful for her pupils. So, she decides to spend her summer vacation finding out more about working in retail by getting a job in a department store in New York.

Clifford Shaw

Clifford Shaw worked as a part-time parole officer in Chicago in the 1920s. Two key influences on his work were his wife, Hetta Shaw, a trained social worker with experience in Boston and Chicago, and Jane Addams, who professionalised social work in Chicago and had links with the School of Social Service Administration and the Sociology Department (Blackman, 2021). Whilst working as a parole officer, he met a teenager called Stanley (a pseudonym). He was a survivor of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, who had been incarcerated 27 times by the time he was 17 years old, for crimes ranging from petty theft to street robbery. Shaw agreed to research Stanley's career using a life history approach. This was published as *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (Shaw, 1930/1966) (the term 'jack-rolling' was slang for street robbery). In the life history, Shaw and Stanley emphasised the central role of learning in his career. This was not a narrowly cognitive or school-based style of learning. The learning career included important relationships, emotions, situations, and stories, for example, Stanley's relationships with his parents, growing up in the slum district, incarceration, and the new location and caregivers of his post-prison life. Conversations between Shaw and Stanley enabled the latter to eventually make commitments in work and relationships. These led to transitions into a more settled kind of life, where violent episodes sometimes recurred, although less frequently (Snodgrass, 2012).

Everett Hughes

The studies identified above focused on fieldwork. In a series of groundbreaking papers, their fellow Chicago sociologist, Everett Hughes, provided the first systematic theoretical statements about the study of career.

One of Hughes's main contributions is to use theory to engage in the *comparative analysis* of career. As he put it, to develop a theoretical vocabulary which is as equally useful for understanding the careers of professors, pickle factory workers, and junk peddlers (Hughes, 1951/1971). So, in his terms, that is what career theory attempts to do. Following Simmel, it provides a critical vocabulary for the comparative interpretation of career. This technical vocabulary was gradually extended to include: marginality, culture, social system, calling, drama, roles, cycles, turning points, status change, interaction, learning, lines of interest, and rituals (Hughes, 1928; 1937; 1949; 1952/1971;1961/1997).

Career theory is seen as a tool to explore the uniqueness, similarities, and differences between individuals. This involves seeing through the veils of prestige and stigma that

adhere to contrasting career areas and lends a critical edge to career theory. At the same time, following Weber, this cannot lead to a universal theory of career. Such a universalising approach might approximate to a kind of grand narrative of career and that is not what Hughes had in mind. He saw career theory as a cultural tool to open up and explore career in all its complexity and cultural richness. There could be no limit to the range of concepts employed as it delved ever deeper into the rich and inexhaustible complexity of career.

For Hughes, as it was for Thomas and Znaniecki, career is seen as a life career; 'a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees [their] life as a whole' (Hughes, 1937, p. 410). It could relate to working in a job, raising a family, engaging in civic life, or the pursuit of leisure activities. Following Simmel's concept of sociation, career is always viewed in movement, and this includes the various roles, occupations, organisations, people, objects, and actions relevant to the individual.

> …a study of careers – of the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order…may be expected to reveal the nature and 'working constitution' of a society. Institutions are but the forms in which the collective behaviour and collective action of people go on. In the course of a career the person finds [their] place within these forms, carries on [their] active life with reference to other people, and interprets the meaning of the one life [they have] to live.
>
> Hughes (1937, p. 413)

Seen in these terms, career involves the art of interpretation. Following James, it is intimately concerned with the meaning we make of the lives we lead. It not wholly or narrowly subjective because its community-based, social, and relational nature inevitably brings us into contact with others. It is also situated as it occurs in a specific time, place, space, and context. Career connects the micro and the macro, the subjective and the objective, and lends insight into the wider society i.e. what Hughes termed the constitution of society. Career links to history, institutions, social systems, technology, the labour market, and the social groups to which we belong (racial, national ethnic, religious, class, and sexual) (Hughes, c. 1961/1997). Here, the wide scope and ambition of career studies becomes apparent.

Linked to its social and relational features, career is also seen as dramaturgical because it entails role playing, actors, relations with others, routines, and acts. It involves a range of players operating in an interactional system and situated on stages. The players use these stages to follow scripts but also engage in role extemporisation (Hughes, 1955/1971). Career involves rituals, stage managers, contingencies, and audiences (Hughes, 1937).

Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman formed part of a second wave of career researchers at Chicago (see also Becker, 1963; Strauss, 1975). In the collection of essays titled, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Goffman (1961/1968) does not seek to adjudicate as to whether mental patients are mentally ill or whether mental health professionals are sane. Rather, his focus is on exploring the 'career contingencies' (p. 126) and the changes in self, situation, and status that are central to career development. Goffman also provides a significant definition of career:

> Traditionally the term 'career' has been reserved for those who expect to enjoy the rises laid out within a respectable profession. The term is coming to be used, however, in a broadened sense to refer to any person's course through life…Such a career is not something that can be brilliant or disappointing; it can no more be a success than a failure…
>
> Goffman (1961/1968, p. 119)

In Goffman's usage, the career takes place over the course of an entire life. Following the similar work of Hughes, Thomas, and Znaniecki, it is a life career. It is not seen as exclusively synonymous with a job, paid work, or employment. For sure, it very often involves those activities, but it relates to a variety of others including, for example, studying, parenting, civic life, health, leisure, religious commitments, etc. Career is seen as democratic and egalitarian in the sense that everyone has a career from the moment they are born to the moment they die. In common speech, we may talk about having multiple careers but, strictly speaking, we only have one career. We can have many occupations, jobs, and other roles, but we only have one career just as we only have one life.

Goffman acknowledges stereotypical conceptions of career linked to middle class jobs and promotion but defines it in more open and egalitarian terms. He notes that career is sometimes connected with notions of prestige and success but seeks to decouple it from these rather restrictive and elitist meanings. Following Hughes, he intends that we should be critical and able to *see through* prestige, stigma, success, and failure.

Goffman further argues for the value of studying career:

> One value of the concept of career is its two-sidedness. One side is linked to internal matters held dearly and closely, such as images of self and felt identity; the other side concerns official position, jural relations, and style of life, and is part of a publicly accessible institutional complex. The concept of career, then, allows one to move back and forth between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society.
>
> Goffman (1961/1968, p. 119)

Career is seen as an important integrative and critical concept. One that can bridge dualisms such as public and private, the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective. It includes, and makes space for, the emotional and affective aspects of life relating to 'felt identity'. It emphasises the importance of how individuals see themselves i.e., 'images of self'. Whilst, at the same time, it flags up the inherently social nature of career. It is, by definition, linked to position, status, and public life.

Links with later career theory

As can be seen from the above section, researchers at Chicago laid the foundations for career studies as a field of enquiry. This section advances the argument by showing how theories of career development from a range of disciplines continue to be shaped by the interactionist conception of career. It is argued that this lends the field an underlying coherence and rigour that might otherwise be overlooked.

Developmental theory (Super, 1957, 1980, 1992) is generally seen as a psychological theory, and this is understandable, as Super's life span theory drew heavily from the whole of life psychology pioneered by Charlotte Bühler. In another sense, however, developmental theory is intensely sociological and saturated with sociological references. The title of the landmark publication *The Psychology of Careers* (Super, 1957) was selected to differentiate it from *The Psychology of Occupations* (Roe, 1956) published the year previously. Career was employed as a holistic term to encompass a range of occupations throughout the life course. In so doing, Super intentionally used the sociological concept of 'career' and strove to link this more fully with psychology. Chicago School sociologists including Hughes, Shaw, and Becker were cited in the text as well as two significant sociological career pattern studies from other universities (Davidson & Anderson, 1937; Miller & Form, 1951). It is therefore a key moment in the transdisciplinary evolution of career studies and marks a movement from *vocational* guidance to *career* guidance.

Even more significantly, the influence of the 'I' and the 'me' (discussed previously in relation to James and Mead) can be detected in Super's later elaboration of the self-concept and visualisation. The self-concept is defined as, 'a picture of the self in some role, some situation, in a position, performing some set of functions, or in some web of relationships' (Super, 1963, p. 18). It consists of an overall self-concept system with interlocking role self-concepts (Super, 1992). In developing this approach, Super fully acknowledged the influence of the Jamesian and Meadian 'I' and 'me' (Super & Bohn, 1971, p. 106). The self-concept, in developmental theory, is always seen as a social and relational self. Despite some later criticisms (K. Roberts, 1977), Super's self is profoundly psychosocial. Also, note the deeply embedded visual metaphor, 'a picture of the self', which echoes the Hughesian definition of career, 'the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order' (Hughes, 1937, p. 413).

Finally, the influence of the interactionist tradition can be seen perhaps most strongly in Super's (1980) later work on the life-span and life-space approach to career theory. The life career rainbow concept echoes directly the life career (as set out by Thomas and Znaniecki, Hughes, and Goffman). The concepts of roles, role salience, performance, and theatres mirror the dramaturgical view of career (Hughes, 1937; 1955/1971). In addition, Super's concept of minicycles can be linked with status passages, turning points, and cycles (Hughes, 1949; 1952/1971).

We can now read the opportunity structure argument mobilised by K. Roberts (1977) against developmental theory as reflective of a profound debate *within sociology itself* between structural and interactionist conceptions of social life. In this respect, it is telling, and productive for the further evolution of the field, that at least three interactionist critiques of opportunity structure emerged.

Robert Roberts's critique of opportunity structure theory was based squarely in the interactionist tradition and argued for a life career biographical approach to career education through which a relevant and appropriate curriculum would emerge (R. Roberts, 1980). Building directly on this critique, community interaction theory argued that career takes place in communities and is mediated by modes of interaction (expectations, support, information, feedback, and modelling) (Law, 1981, 1993, 2009) and a process of career learning (Law, 1996). A little later, the careership (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson, 2009) and learning career theories (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000) drew directly from the

interactionist tradition in their conceptualisation of career (citing Hughes and Goffman) with an added Bourdieusian dimension.

In organisational studies, the publication of the *Handbook of Career Theory* led to a resurgence of interest in the interactionist tradition (Arthur et al., 1989a). This text contained an important chapter on career studies and the legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology (Barley, 1989). This chapter became a key point of reference for organisational understandings of career and beyond. Returning to the book as a whole, in arguing for a transdisciplinary approach to career theory, the editors adopted a Hughesian inflected definition of career (Arthur et al. 1989b). The definition of career used was influential and adopted in later publications in organisational studies including the *Handbook of Career Studies* (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007) and *Understanding Careers* (Inkson, 2014). More recently, organisational scholars have revised the Arthur et al. definition and anchored it even more strongly in the Chicago School tradition (Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018). Gunz and Mayrhofer argue that the four concepts of career in the social chronology framework (spatial, ontic, temporal, and pattern) relate directly to the interactionist conception of career.

The scholarship of the Chicago School is acknowledged in the narrative turn in the social sciences. In many respects, the life history method is seen as a precursor of narrative enquiry (Polkinghorne, 1988). It also influences the foundations of career construction theory where the work of Hughes and Shaw is acknowledged (Savickas, 1994; 2002).

The interactionist tradition has a significant place in educational studies. Gallacher et al. (2002) use Goffman's definition of career to anchor their concept of the learning career. Cultural learning theory (McCash, 2021) uses an interactionist conceptualisation of career focused on relationships, contents, learning, contexts, and story (drawing from Hughes, Shaw, and Becker). Gee (2023) uses Goffman's definition of career to enable university students and staff to critically interrogate employability.

Criminology has been informed by the concept of career both in its early days (Glueck & Glueck, 1930; Shaw, 1930/1966) and in its modern incarnation (Kyvsgaard, 2002). In the latter example, the interactionist tradition is drawn on to define the criminal career using the work of Shaw, Hughes, and Goffman.

Discussion

As can be seen above, the interactionist conceptualisation of career provides the foundation for a range of contributions in psychology, organisational studies, narrative theory, educational studies, and criminology. Viewed in these terms, the field of career studies is less fractured than it might appear. Some scholars have argued the field is fragmented and siloed (for example, Schein, 2005, as cited in Moore et al., 2007; McMahon & Arthur, 2019) but these readings may require some revision. There was productive dialogue between the early scholars of career in sociology and psychology. There is solid evidence that they read each other's work, and made positive remarks concerning it, whilst also establishing their own positions (Super, 1954, 1957; Hughes, c. 1961/1997). This level of integration provides a foundation for further transdisciplinary contributions to the field. It can be extended to other fields such as geography, philosophy, media studies, depth psychology, and professional studies; and other people-focused professions including social work, youth work, teaching, learning and development, probation work, coaching, and counselling.

As discussed earlier, the field of career studies is currently witnessing a number of important attempts at taking an integrative approach to understanding career theory (for example, Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018; McCash, 2021; Patton & McMahon, 2021; Savickas, 2021; Yates, 2021). Integrative approaches need to deal with the complex and challenging issue of attempting to integrate theories with opposing epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions. The interactionist tradition is helpful in this respect as it acknowledges multiple realities (see Thomas & Znaniecki, Hughes, Goffman) and holds that they can be known through a process of interpretation (Weber, Hughes). It also has clear commitments to ethical values with a focus on understanding others and engaging in practical support (Donovan, Shaw). It is also constructed on a rich and coherent intellectual foundation (James, Mead, Weber, Simmel, Kant).

Many career theories are potentially congruent with the interactionist tradition provided their underpinning ideas are consistent with the above philosophy. Nevertheless, there are challenges. Some theories, which are otherwise highly valuable contributions, use alternative terms to career such as working (Blustein, 2006) and livelihood (Arulmani, 2014) because they see career as referring to middle class, privileged, volitional work. As can be seen, this takes us full circle, as it is precisely these stereotypes of career that the Chicago School dismantled a hundred years ago.

At the same time, it is important to retain a critical stance in relation to the interactionist tradition. The work of individuals from over a century ago cannot be uncritically idealised. For example, language was used in ways that are no longer considered appropriate and the current author has inserted gender neutral pronouns in some of the quotations used above. In addition, the important contributions of female and black researchers, whilst acknowledged at the time, have sometimes been underplayed in later historical accounts. These issues are being addressed by a range of scholars (for example, Blackman, 2023; Hart, 2010; Kurent, 1982). In addition, greater acknowledgement of issues such as power and culture is now reflected in a movement towards cultural and critical interactionism (Becker & McCall, 1990; Jacobsen, 2019).

Conclusion

This article provides an argument in favour of the interactionist conception of career. It is seen as an inclusive term that embraces those who are located at the margins of society. Career is defined as relational, social, cultural, and spatial, and mediated by a process of learning.

Career theory provides a critical vocabulary for the comparative analysis of career. Since reality is inexhaustible, there is no limit to the range of this vocabulary. Provided the underlying philosophies are consistent with the interactionist philosophy, there is no difficulty in embracing theories from a wide range of disciplines.

Career is a significant integrative concept in its own right. It connects the macro and the micro. It links individual lives, and how individuals see themselves, with the constitution of society. There is nothing outside of career and so it is through a deep understanding of career that the wider culture is revealed. It also integrates common dualisms such as the public and the private, the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective, the emotional and the cognitive.

Career means a life career that is dynamic and always in movement. It entails a process of making meaning and the art of interpretation. It is a critical term that we can use to see through veils of prestige and stigma, and explore, in ever deepening richness, the drama of life.

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Article

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Integrating the disciplines: Applying sociology of third space to contemporary, constructivist career development

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Abstract

The field of career development is grounded in diverse sociological perspectives contributing to addressing the complex interplay between individuals and societal contexts. This paper advocates for the use of a third space concept from cultural sociology traditions to working with marginalised clients and developing culturally sensitive career interventions. Applying this generative concept to constructivist career counselling, the relationship between counsellor and client is conceptualised as a productive boundary zone of an intercultural dialogue, which occurs in a broader environmental-societal system and advances the use of Systems Theory Framework of career development.

Keywords: career development, multi-disciplinarity, cultural sociology, third space concept, Systems Theory Framework

Introduction

During the first two decades of the new millennium, social, cultural, technological, and economic factors have been impacting and challenging the notions of work; the nature of work, the institution of work, and the complex interchange between work itself. In contemporary times, there has been an increased focus on global environmental concerns

and the preservation of life on Earth within the context of a post-globalization era (Carr, 2023). Additionally, the progress made towards attaining the United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals has been a topic of concern (Arthur & McMahon, 2019). The global pandemic's impact on employment and individual workers has also been widely acknowledged. This has coincided with a rise in precarious work and a decline in access to satisfactory employment opportunities (Allan, 2023; Allan et al, 2021; Blustein et al., 2019; Kalleberg, 2018). Furthermore, there has been a renewed emphasis on the notion of a boundaryless world, particularly within the broader discourse on boundaries in the social sciences (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). These developments have augmented the ongoing discussions within the field of career development theory and practice. Interconnected global phenomena provide the overarching environmental-societal context in career development when viewed from the Systems Theory Framework perspective, and affect every individual, every culture, and the society at large (McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 2021). The increasing complexity of *modern work* (Schwartz et al., 2019), and the consequent emergence of new demands on career development practice and practitioners necessitate a revision of the question of the disciplinary integration. This may entail engaging in a more profound discourse regarding the disciplines that can be perceived as closely aligned with the current conditions of the world of work, and what concepts can be put forward to support multi-disciplinarity.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the conventional disciplines of career development and acknowledges the contributions of social sciences perspectives to the field. It then turns its attention to the concept of third space (Bhabha, 1994; Lefebvre, 1974; Soja, 1996) used in a range of social science and humanities disciplines and grounded in the traditions of cultural sociology and postcolonial studies. This paper then explores the potential of applying this concept to constructivist career development discipline and practice.

The authors present an example of contemporary studies that have utilised the analytical framework of the third space in the field of higher education. Specifically, these studies focus on the exploration of university staff members (i.e., professional staff who are often defined by the deficit term 'non-academic') who operate across various organisational boundaries, at times finding themselves marginalised while working across academic and professional domains and various non-traditional spheres of university activity. These actors experience transformations in their professional identities and work practices while working across different representational spaces. The purpose of discussing these examples is to promote the application of productive sociological and sociocultural perspectives in addressing complex career development issues that have been identified as concerns in this introduction.

The paper concludes by inviting career development scholars and practitioners to engage in a dialogue to promote the application of sociological traditions to career practice as inclusive, equitable, and effective constructivist approaches that address complex influences within modern work, individual professional identities and spaces which individuals inhabit in their work. It is suggested that further exploration of how third space concept can enhance the value and relevance of constructivist career theories, particularly within the context of the Systems Theory Framework of career development, can be timely and appropriate.

Conventional disciplines in career development

The foundations of career development theories lie in psychology. Differential psychology was used to match an individual's personality traits with the specific attributes of different occupations, enabling the identification of the most suitable vocational fit (Hambly & Bomford, 2019). However, the existing theories that have traditionally emphasised individual internal psychological factors in career development (e.g., Holland's matching theory and Super's developmental approach) have faced criticism for not considering the socio-economic constraints in individuals' career decision-making. This criticism has prompted the involvement of sociologists in this field. Sociologists have expanded the understanding of contextual elements that significantly impact an individual's career development (e.g., social class, gender, and cultural background), thereby integrating social perspectives into their scholarly inquiries. Roberts (1975) argued that the implementation of a self-concept (e.g., Super, 1990) is not relevant for all individuals, as life opportunities are often linked to those who already occupy privileged position in society. The self-concept perspective, therefore, tends to favour certain groups while excluding others.

Acknowledging these criticisms, scholars in the field of career development have been integrating both individual and environmental perspectives, as represented by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994), Systems Theory Framework (STF: McMahon & Patton, 1995), and Psychology of Working Theory (PWT: Blustein, 2013; Duffy et al., 2016). While SCCT encompasses contextual, personal, and behavioural factors (e.g., self-efficacy, social support, and goal setting; Lent & Brown, 2019), STF includes various systemic influences, including social and environmental-societal factors (Patton & McMahon, 2021). In addition, economic constraints and instances of marginalisation are positioned as the primary contextual predictor variables in PWT (Duffy et al., 2016). Thus, these theories emphasise constraints and marginalisation that are less likely to lead to stable employment. Beyond these theories in career development, other social science disciplines, such as anthropology, business, economics, education, geography, history, and political science, have contributed to the field of career development (Gunz, 2009; Hambly & Bomford, 2019). For example, the business discipline has actively engaged in facilitating workplace career development, focusing on career management, motivation, and task performance. Since career development cannot be comprehended from a singular perspective, it is essential to embrace various disciplines (Arthur & McMahon, 2019; Collin, 2009; Collin & Patton, 2009).

Sociology of third space and boundary crossing

The concept of third space is explored in social theory (Bell, 1976; Bourdieu, 1984) across a range of social science and humanities disciplines including *inter alia* anthropology, cultural and gender studies, education, geography and, primarily, in sociology and cultural sociology, in particular. The concept had been used productively to explore social relationships, diversity, and boundaries (Barstow, 2018; Bhabha, 1994; Lossau, 2009; Routledge, 1996; Soja, 1996). Lefebvre (1974) initially positioned space as central to dynamic social relations. Space was later particularised by Foucault (1984) and Knott (2005) as a socially constructed, activity-generating reality as opposed to static backdrop. Space, according to Massey (1993, 2005), represents temporality, process, and progression, connecting local and global social relations.

Scholarly preoccupation with the spatial turn among researchers and educators across a range of social sciences emerged in the final decades of the 20th century (Veles, 2022). The transition between the centuries was accompanied by the complexities of a constantly changing environment, further defragmentation of work, and a departure from understanding careers as a linear and singular path through working life. In people's working lives, the increasing complexity and multi-layered nature of professional identities suggested further that the two-dimensional – historical (temporal) and social (sociological) – representations of the world appeared to be no longer sufficient. A series of critical re-imaginings of the world and human condition precipitated the emergence of a third – spatial – dimension of productive and reproductive unification of the physical, the social and the mental (Ikas & Wagner, 2009; Smith, 2004; Soja, 1996, 2010).

Within the spatial, third space appears when an invisible line is drawn between inside and outside culture, between various identity groups, delineating social and organisational structures. Since it is impossible to imagine a completely dichotomous world, interstitial spaces inevitably come to being, thereby representing cultures, identities and structures that belong to neither one nor another world. It presents an 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications…[with the] possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4).

Continuous recombination and exchange among multiple identities and diverse perspectives is what makes third space simultaneously 'a place of critical exchange' (Soja, 1996, p. 5) and 'collaboration and contestation' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2).

Third-space thinking possesses not only metaphorical appeal, but analytical power: exploring spaces that expressly value difference while preserving individual voices and amplifying unique stories provides insights into ways through which social and professional interactions with people of different cultures and professional identities create something truly unique, which may at times be more meaningful than each of them would have created on her or his own. Despite linguistic ambivalence discussed by Lossau (2009), the concept of third space remains meaningful and generative. Widely applied in education theory and practice (Daza et al., 2021; Janzen & Petersen, 2020; Leonard et al., 2023; McAlpine & Hopwood, 2009; Zeichner, 2010), third space concept has been engaged to explore the organisational complexity of higher education discourses (Thomas, 2015). Whitchurch (2008, 2012) extended the concept to higher education research, investigating contributions from multiple actors (academic and professional staff alike) beyond rigid boundaries of organisational divisions, job descriptions and role scopes).

The emergence of a novel representation of socio-cultural influences and dimensions through space and the application of the concept of third space, allows individuals to create diverse, new, and unique identities, envision unexplored domains of employment, devise innovative approaches to work, and imagine unprecedented careers. Such novel representation is argued by the authors as being strongly connected to systems thinking in a way that it allows people to be in touch with the 'wholeness of [their] existence' (Flood, 2010, p. 282) while thinking about themselves in the context of multiple, interconnected influences and becoming aware of potentiality of other choices and opportunities in their lives (Patton & McMahon, 2021).

Third-space thinking, however, goes beyond systems thinking as it carries the potential to enhance personal empowerment, foster a sense of agency, and advance self-efficacy. In

career practice, and in constructivist career counselling in particular, third-space thinking can be instrumental in understanding how individuals conceptualise their careers within the social and cultural contexts that shape their lives. For career practitioners, third-space thinking advances the practices of culture-infused career counselling (Arthur, 2017; Arthur & Collins, 2011) and helps to reveal environmental influences affecting vulnerable clients and marginalised communities, their personal and collective identities, and the complex interplay of both. Client conceptualisation and designed career interventions through and with the assistance of socio-cultural third space promote a perspective that is both dynamic and contextually situated. This perspective not only incorporates spatial thinking into systems thinking, but also advances the latter by illuminating socially and culturally ambiguous interstices that exist between established categories. These spaces, often overlooked or ignored, attend to critical matters like systemic injustices, exclusionary work practices and misrecognition and necessitate a strong commitment to social justice advocacy in the realm of career development.

The concept of third space was used to research various professional practices, with higher education studies being one such example. The example provided below is to demonstrate the analytical power of third space concept applied to one group of higher education workers, namely, professional staff working across multiple organisational domains of academia and professional services, and discuss how the learnings from this research can be applied to career development field of practice.

The concept of the university third space has been used to explore how the university staff who work across multiple organisational boundaries and, therefore, engage in complex identity-making and continuous identity-reshaping interpret their boundary-crossing work (Veles, 2022; Whitchurch, 2008, 2018). As universities worldwide extend their agendas beyond the traditional anchors in teaching and research, and therefore broaden their areas of operation, they are also redefining their connections with various local, national, and international communities, such as schools, industries, and other research and community organisations. Consequently, the conventional university dichotomy between academic and professional roles and identities is becoming obsolete as it no longer reflects the contemporary university organisation (Veles, 2022; Whitchurch, 2008).

These newly established spaces serve as a meeting point for both academics and diverse professionals who are employed as non-academics to collaborate on university projects, generate innovative ideas, and cultivate novel practices that contribute to the advancement of the university's objectives and the fulfilment of its institutional mission. Individuals working across boundaries, whether routinely or through specially designed projects, became identified as third space professionals (Whitchurch, 2012). They often engage in activities requiring multiple knowledge sets relating to academic disciplines, organisational systems, professional expertise, competencies of relationship development and translation skills to connect all these weakly connected systems. Such boundary-crossing activities (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) include, *inter alia*, academic development and academic advising, digital technology development, research funding policy and implementation, student engagement and learning support, academic library liaison, community partnerships, employability, career support for students and staff and integrating career and the world of work competencies into the academic curricula (Veles et al., 2023).

Research demonstrates that working in third spaces can be rewarding for some and controversial for others (McIntosh & Nutt, 2022; Veles, 2023; Whitchurch, 2008; 2023). One characteristic of third space work is its systemic invisibility within the organisation and the corresponding lack of recognition of the contributions of those working in those invisible spaces, especially on behalf of senior members of the institution. Non-traditional boundary zones create new practices belonging to neither constituent practice site. They are not 'neatly' positioned in the existing organisational structure and are at times overlooked for their fluid and transient nature, which creates invisibility of people and under-recognised effort and awkward positioning of the third space workers. On the other hand, working across boundaries in those interstitial and even invisible to organisation spaces enriches practices and improves the knowledge of the participating individuals about respective knowledge and practice sites and developing new ways of learning and doing (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Akkerman & Bruining, 2016). Working on novel and emerging new spaces assists in addressing and, at times, erasing the unhelpful beliefs founded in the traditional organisational binary of academic and non-academic work, practices, and identities (Veles, 2022).

Working within third spaces entails various implications for professional relationships, personal identity, legitimacy, and social standing. Additionally, it offers prospects for unconventional career paths for individuals. It is therefore crucial to approach interactions in these spaces with an understanding and acknowledgement of distinct backgrounds, and often dissimilar and nonetheless valuable viewpoints of people involved. This approach is necessary to ensure proper recognition of their contributions and to assist them in effectively navigating the tensions and challenges that arise from engaging in cross-boundary work. Whether people occupy those hybrid spaces by the design of their work arrangement or through engagement in time-framed projects, third space professionals find the process of constructing their identities and careers non-linear and at times challenging (Obexer, 2022). There is an identified deficit in clear career pathways (Gander et al., 2019; Moran & Misra, 2018; Whitchurch, 2023) for such individuals. This is partly related to multiple stakeholders with whom they interact, more than one professional group membership to which they may belong, many ways of defining and enacting professionalism and specialism through their work. It is also partly through their own lack of clarity about imagining their future work, place and space within and outside the organisational reality. Should they continue working in third spaces, and creating new identities, engaging in new work roles, designing their own work profile, and displaying hybrid career orientations (Hall, 2004)? Or should they transition to one or the other – academic or professional – space, and if yes, would this be perceived as a departure instead of advancing their career aspirations? Or are there other, perhaps not yet explored, futures for them outside the world of academia?

To effectively navigate the complex issues faced by third space professionals who possess hybrid career orientations of conventional and modern job values, it is crucial for career practitioners to employ a culturally sensitive and socially just approach. This entails providing specialised support to individuals in this unique position. Career practices that are informed by cultural sociology and third-space thinking entail the collaboration between career practitioners and third-space clients to explore the potential for cultivating sustainable careers. These careers are characterised by a series of similar or diverse professional experiences that unfold over time. They are also marked by the presence of various patterns of continuity in terms of crossing boundaries between different work and

learning environments, extending beyond organisational and social contexts. To provide meaning during the whole lifespan, sustainable careers require from clients the intentional exercise of individual agency (De Vos et al., 2020; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015), in which career practitioners can be of service as they deploy third-space thinking to practice.

Utilising productive sociocultural perspectives in addition to drawing on foundational knowledge of psychology for career development practice is likely to assist in addressing the complex career concerns of clients. Clients in this category frequently encounter the necessity to engage in intentional efforts to construct and harmonise multiple professional identities. This process involves ongoing interaction with diverse bodies of knowledge and demands the development and regular updating of multifaceted skills to enhance various aspects of their work and aid stakeholders across multiple domains. These challenges are intensified by the unpredictability of the contemporary work environment, which affects all individuals seeking career development, regardless of whether they operate within conventional and well-defined contexts or within ambiguous and fluid spaces.

Concluding thoughts on generative integration of sociological and career development perspectives

It would be remiss if this paper concludes without mentioning the warning of Vondracek and Porfeli (2008) against using 'antiquated theories or narrow adaptations of circumscribed or segmental models from psychology, sociology, or anthropology' (p. 216). It would also be neglectful of the authors if the paper does not comment on how the proposed integration of the disciplinary perspectives advances the postulates of the already mature, live and highly generative Systems Theory Framework of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2021).

The authors argue that career development scholars and practitioners face a challenge in finding a comprehensive model that adequately encompasses the intricate nature of human functioning and development within various contexts. According to Vondracek and Porfeli, no single unifying model or metatheoretical framework can fully address the diverse influences of environmental and individual factors on the lifelong process of career development. Furthermore, these models must also consider the ethical implications, promote diversity, and advocate for clients who may be insecure or vulnerable. The weight of this ambitious undertaking in supporting careers that require navigating extraordinary challenges of legitimising horizontally produced knowledge, diversity of cultures and identities, and generating new and novel meaning across boundaries (Akkerman et al., 2006; Aveling et al., 2015, Veles, 2022).

It is for these reasons that the article advocates the integration of cultural sociology and its generative concept of third space, with its focus on professional identity and career hybridity, into constructivist career development with its attention on individuals – clients and career counsellors – co-constructing clients' career stories, identities, and lives. Such integration has the potential to deepen the understanding of the interplay between personal-behavioural, social, and relational and broader contextual factors in shaping the career trajectories of individuals.

Deliberate work on the integration of third-space critical thinking can support individual aspirations for meaningful construction of work anchored in social purpose, authentic values and harmonic well-being (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016) while further assisting individuals in achieving sustainable careers (De Vos et al, 2020; Van der Heijden, & De Vos, 2015), accessing decent work and living and enjoying decent lives (Di Fabio, Medvide, & Kenny, 2022), which are the goals of contemporary career development of the increasingly complex modern life.

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Parallel representations: Career development in media and academic literature

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the portrayal of careers in print media, a subject minimally addressed in career development studies. It employs media content analysis to compare and map the language used in British print media when discussing careers with that in academic discourse. Using vOSViewer for text mapping and data visualisation, this study mirrors Lee et al. (2014)'s approach to systematically analyse 1,287 newspaper articles, identifying and exploring prevalent terms and concepts within career-themed articles. It highlights the intersection of media and career development studies, revealing how media narratives can influence the perception and discussion of career development.

Keywords: Media studies; career development; content analysis; interdisciplinarity

Introduction

Career development is an inherently multidisciplinary field, drawing upon the theoretical and empirical contributions of sociology, psychology, and education, among others, to provide an understanding of how individuals navigate their professional journeys. However,

the contribution of media studies to this dialogue has often been underexplored, despite its potential to offer profound insights into the societal norms and narratives that shape our understanding of careers.

This paper aims to highlight the significance of media studies within the wider framework of interdisciplinary investigation into careers and career development. It specifically focuses on the unique perspectives that analysis of media can provide on the dynamic interplay between public narratives of career and individual experience of career development. The focus of media studies on the production, dissemination, and reception of media content provides a distinctive lens for examining career narratives, revealing how they are both influenced by and contribute to cultural and societal understanding of career development and construction of career identities and aspirations.

In a broader context, media plays a key role in informing the public and shaping their attitudes towards social concepts, especially when the audience lacks direct knowledge or experience (Happer & Philo, 2013). This includes the area of career development, where media discourse significantly influences how individuals perceive and navigate their career paths. By presenting various career narratives in particular ways, the media contributes to shaping understanding and attitudes towards different professions and career progressions. Simultaneously, the way journalists present and frame career development in public discourse plays a crucial role in forming and influencing public opinion on this subject (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

In careers education, the role of media is very significant, serving as an essential tool for disseminating information and shaping perceptions about a wide array of career paths. Through various platforms ranging from digital content (Sampson et al., 2018) to traditional broadcasts (Gehrau, 2016), media offers a rich repository of insights, trends, and role models, significantly influencing career choices and aspirations (Apostol & Näsi, 2013).

By mapping print media discourse against academic literature on career development, this study seeks to identify areas of intersection, divergence, and mutual influence between media and academic discourses. It seeks to determine whether the trends in print media reflect or differ from the theories developed by academic researchers about career development, as well as to understand the everyday career experiences of individuals.

In the field of career development, media, as a social institution working towards the 'production of knowledge and culture' (McQuail, 1985, p. 97), holds significant power in setting agendas and steering public attention towards specific career-related issues and trends in society (Gans, 1979). The development of meaning and the construction of career narratives occur through the ways in which the media portrays particular interests, social actors, descriptions, explanations, experiences, and ideas from a particular ideological perspective (Orgad, 2016).

As a result, studying media messages is essential for a nuanced understanding of how career choices and pathways are shaped and understood by recipients through the communication methods of journalists and media owners. News stories, reports, images, and texts in the media particularly act as key resources, enabling individuals to construct meaning and form perceptions about various careers and professional opportunities in their minds and identify themselves as a member of a common culture with similar

understandings and perceptions (Van Dijk, 1998). Although the emergence of social media and digital news platforms is implicated in the decreasing popularity of print journalism, newspapers remain a frequent point of reference for rival news media, and a standard source for understanding how social phenomena or political issues are commonly interpreted. In other words, the importance of newspapers in the media's agenda-setting is far from being diminished, and print media continues to play an important role in raising debate about the stories they select and editorially frame (Cushion et al., 2016).

There are some examples of research that explore the influence of public discourse on formation of narratives around subjects relevant to career development. Bergmo-Prvulovic (2015) examines social understandings of careers, uncovering four distinct social representations of career as individual project of self-realisation, social/hierarchical climbing, game of exchange and uncertain outcome through free association. Lewig and Dollard (2001) offer a critical view on the media representation of work stress in Australian news, highlighting the focus of media narratives on economic cost of work stress. Kirchler (1992) explores unequal gender role representation in management by analysing print media. Vandenberghe (2018) investigates how newspapers portray working women, with a focus on work-family balance. Patton and Johns (2012) conduct a comparative analysis of absenteeism in both academic literature and popular press, revealing trends in media representation and Cohen and Duberley (2013) analyse narratives from the Desert Island Discs radio programme to explore career development within social and cultural contexts. By adopting various insights and methodologies, these studies highlight the media's potentially significant role in shaping and reflecting the social construction of career narratives and enrich our understanding of how careers are perceived, discussed, and influenced within society.

Methodology

In their 2014 study, Lee et al. pioneered a methodical approach to categorise the academic journal articles in the field of career studies. They used vOSViewer, a software for text mapping, to systematically review articles on career topics across various social science disciplines. This innovative technique marked a significant enhancement over conventional narrative reviews, providing a comprehensive analytical perspective on the predominant terms and themes related to careers. Their extensive research included 16,146 articles, enabling them to graphically demonstrate the frequency, connections, and groupings of key terms in scholarly discussions on careers. This paper adopts a similar approach, using VOSviewer for text mining and data visualisation. It focuses on examining 1,287 newspaper articles, aiming to identify and analyse the most recurrent terms and concepts within these articles, mirroring the methodology of Lee et al. in their comprehensive review of career-themed academic articles.

The method of 'relevance sampling' (Deacon, 2007; Krippendorff, 2004) guided the data collection process of this study, targeting newspaper articles from *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Mail*. Covering the years 1985 to 2015, a range of career-related key terms were used to systematically identify relevant articles. The choice of these three newspapers was informed by their diverse readerships and differing political orientations. The 30-year period, from 1985 to 2015, was chosen due to its significance in both the academic evolution of career development literature and its manifestation in written media

discourse. The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first were marked by numerous changes in labour markets, business technologies, and economic conditions alongside important developments in the academic field of career studies. Notably, the introduction of concepts such as the boundaryless and protean careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996) during this time provides a foundational basis for examining career narratives' evolution in response to societal changes and the interplay between scholarly and popular media perspectives.

The units of analysis were individual newspaper articles or specific paragraphs from longer feature articles. Segments were selected for their sufficient length to convey a clear message while being concise enough for effective coding during the analysis.

Results

Journalists and academics, while both aiming to inform their audiences, employ different methods of communication due to varying contexts, time constraints, and sensitivity levels (Patton & Johns, 2012). Academics engage in detailed, specialised discourse aimed at a similarly informed audience, often in contrast to the more general, simplified narratives found in news media which cater to a broader, diverse audience (Philo, 2004; Krippendorff, 2004). This divergence is rooted in a dualistic discourse that contrasts theoretical, research-based knowledge with practical, real-life experiences (Björck & Johansson, 2018; Allen & Wright, 2014). The constraints faced by each group shape their output: journalists work under tight deadlines and editorial limits influenced by media corporations' agendas, often leading to simplified or ideologically-tinted narratives (Fowler, 1991). In contrast, academics have more autonomy but must adhere to theoretical and research frameworks (Fealy, 1997; Carr, 2006). The evolving landscape of British higher education and the media's increasing reliance on academic insights for credibility further underline the importance of understanding these differences in the context of public discourse and career development studies (Mullen et al., 2005).

Table 1 illustrates four overlapping clusters that emerge from a comparison between Lee et al.'s (2014) academic research and the narratives prevalent in British print media. The first cluster discusses the interplay between individual career paths, organisational management, and the overarching organisational structures, a topic of interest both in scholarly discourse and in media reporting. Educational impact on career development forms the second shared cluster, with academic literature examining the relationship between educational attainment and career progression, while the media emphasises the significant role of education in advancing career trajectories. The third overlapping cluster concerns high-profile careers, with academic literature discussing careers in prominent or conspicuous professions and the print media frequently mentioning these careers in discussions about career development. Lastly, the intersection of social policy research in academic literature with the social context cluster in media illustrates a collective focus on the societal implications of career development, including economic challenges and social equity concerns as discussed by both academics and the press. These clusters collectively highlight a multifaceted dialogue on the factors influencing career development, bridging academic insights with public commentary.

Table 1: Key Clusters in Academic and Media Discourses

Academic Literature Clusters (Lee et al. 2014)		British Press Clusters	
1- Education	The relationship between education and career development.	**1- Education**	Emphasising the key role of education and training in career advancement.
2- High Profile Careers	Careers in professions that are prominent or conspicuous	**2- High Profile Careers**	The occupational sectors most commonly mentioned in discussions about careers.
3- Organisational Career Development	Interplay between organisational practices and career management.	**3- Organisational Career Development**	Interplay between organisational practices and career management.
4- Social Policy	The implications of career development for social policy	**4- Social Context**	The societal aspects of careers, such as the gender pay gap, pensions, recession, and redundancy.
5- Individual Attributes	The individual-level determinants that influence career progression	**5- Organisational roles**	The dominant terms which are used in relation to job sectors and organisational structure.
6- Doctorate Careers	Academic progression and careers of highly educated individuals		

The discursive map, depicted in Figure 1, highlights the five key clusters identified in newspapers sample. The size of the circles on the map indicates the frequency of each term, while the spatial distance between any two terms reflects their degree of relatedness. Terms that are positioned closely are more likely to appear together in the same articles. Additionally, clusters located at the centre of the map are associated with a broader range of other terms, in contrast to those on the periphery, which have more limited associations. This visual representation aids in understanding the interconnections and relative significance of different terms within the dataset.

Education

The analysis of newspaper articles reveals that the most frequently occurring terms belong to a cluster centred around education and training. This cluster prominently features terms related to higher education, such as 'business school', 'postgraduate degree', 'graduate scheme', and 'academia'. There is a notable parallel between this cluster and the education cluster in academic literature, especially in terms of trends and core concepts. As highlighted by Lee et al. (2014), academic literature portrays educational factors as crucial mediators in the connection between individuals and their career success. Similarly, newspaper articles predominantly focus on training and personal development, aligning with the academic narrative. This representation of discourse as a social practice illuminates the relationship between textual interpretations of careers and broader social processes.

The public discourse around training and education aligns with a trend identified by Kanter in the late 1980s. During this period, there was a move towards standardising occupational skills to improve training and development across various sectors. As noted by Bergmo-Prvulovic (2012, p. 161), this shift in skill development and training meant that in public discourse, individuals were expected to navigate numerous transitions throughout their lives from primary school education to vocational training in college, higher education in universities, apprenticeships, employment with ongoing workplace training, and eventually, retirement.

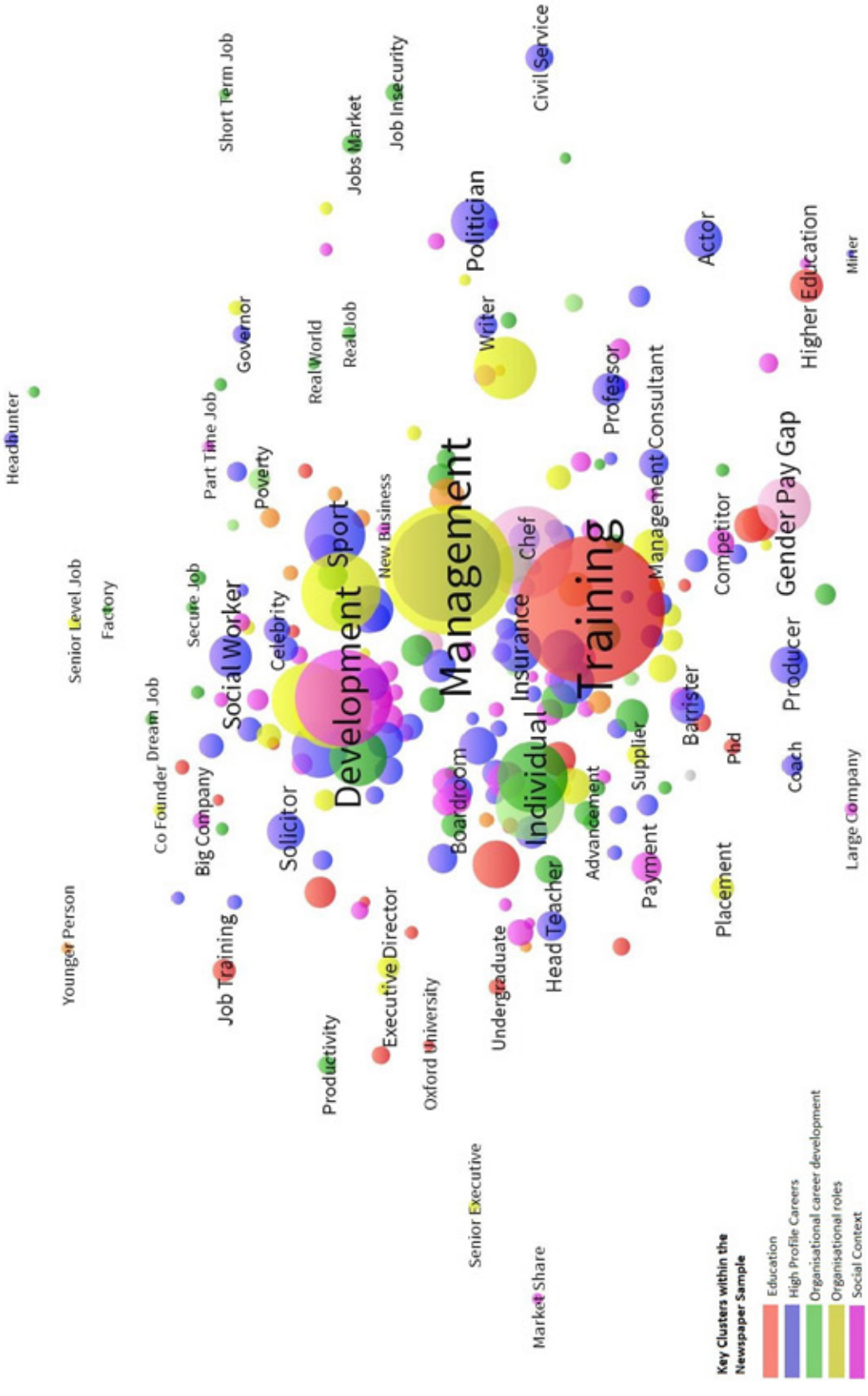

Figure 1: Key Clusters within the Newspapers Sample

A comparative analysis of this cluster in relation to the education cluster in academic literature can be interpreted as a form of 'discourse institutionalisation', which Carvalho (2008, p. 165) defines as the 'transformation of institutional structures and/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse' which shows the interconnection between public career conceptualisations and specific organisational arrangements or institutional practices.

In newspaper articles, there is a notable focus on higher education and the importance of a university degree, with business schools often being central to the majority of career-related narratives. Business schools are particularly recognised as institutions that play a significant role in assisting ambitious students to navigate their career paths in a self-directed and values-driven way to achieve their career goals. Moreover, an MBA degree is frequently portrayed in feature articles as a gateway to new opportunities, more freedom in career choice, and, in some cases, a higher level of career satisfaction and progress. In the academic literature, career development is a primary subject explored in relation to MBA graduates. Undertaking further studies, such as completing an MBA, is a common path for employees seeking organisational career advancement (Clarke, 2013). This interconnection suggests that the way career development is conceptualised in public discourse, with a strong focus on formal education as a pathway to career success, is not just a reflection of societal values but also influences and is reinforced by educational institutions and their practices and the alignment of public perceptions with the structures and offerings of these institutions indicates a mutual reinforcement, where educational practices shape career narratives, and these narratives, in turn, validate and promote the importance of these educational pathways.

High-profile careers

In categorising academic literature on careers, Lee et al. (2014) identified a cluster focused on high-profile careers. This category examines professions that are more prominent or visible than others, with a primary focus on career success. The occupations typically highlighted in this cluster include elite executives, politicians, judges, artists, and entrepreneurs.

A comparable grouping emerged in newspaper articles, showcasing occupational categories that appeared with high frequency in discussion of career development. The significant aspect of this cluster is how journalists define 'career' by associating it with specific occupations. The most frequent terms in this cluster are 'doctor', 'engineer', 'lawyer', 'civil servant', 'sport player' and 'police officer'. Arthur (2014) notes a prevalent tendency to equate careers with status, often distinguishing 'jobs' from 'careers' or associating careers with what is generally regarded as 'professional' work (p. 629). This viewpoint becomes particularly clear in the way certain occupations are discussed more often than others in the media. In the newspaper articles sampled for this study, there is a noticeable focus on professions traditionally considered prestigious or high-status which reflects a societal tendency to regard these roles not merely as jobs, but as examples of successful careers. Such a distinction implies that careers are often perceived as paths that not only provide financial stability but also confer a certain level of societal respect and recognition. This highlights how public discourse and media representations can shape and reinforce societal views on what constitutes a 'valuable' career, potentially influencing individual career choices and aspirations. Furthermore, the prominence of certain occupational categories

like civil servants, councillors, barristers, managers, consultants, diplomats, and finance directors in British print media supports Gowler and Legge's (1989) idea that the use of 'career' as a rhetorical device is especially prevalent in bureaucratic organisations.

Organisational career development

This cluster consists of the dominant terms which are used in newspapers in relation to organisational contexts and structural nuances. Analysing the social actors present in this cluster is insightful, as it facilitates a critical assessment of the criteria and variables empowering communities and individuals in society to engage in media debates and convey their perspectives to the public. In the study of media messages, it is generally accepted that media attention is generally biased toward 'social actors and resource-rich business organisations, who get preferential access to the media in all countries' (Tresch, 2009, p.68). This issue is more pronounced in career development studies, where careers are usually seen as relevant to those in higher social ranks, as opposed to working-class individuals who are often thought to simply have jobs.

'Manager', 'employer', 'CEO', 'chairman' and 'executive officer' are the most prevalent words in this cluster which can be interpreted as a bias towards covering news stories about people who are in the higher level of organisational hierarchies. According to Elejalde et al. (2018), if a newspaper's staff or audience perceives that actors involved in an event are politically or culturally significant, then those events are more likely to be reported. This significance may arise due to a social actor's status, notoriety, or celebrity. In the same way, the media may completely fail to cover events regarding certain topics or groups because they view them as insignificant, distasteful, or not of interest to their readership (Harrison, 2001). Based on the results of this cluster and after making a comparison with the academic literature, it can be understood that the predominant discussion around career is aligned with the observable power dynamic between different classes of society and with a tendency to erase the presence of blue-collar workers from the public discourse. This elimination can be analysed in the context of social justice and how the modern notion of career and changing nature of labour market have served to disempower and erase whole groups of people in society. Rice (2018) argues that a comprehensive understanding and integration of distribution, representation, and recognition, is vital for inclusion and equality in career development narratives. This approach may facilitate equitable participation, especially in media, where representation becomes key to amplifying the voices of diverse social actors and involving them in public discourse.

The analysis of the data specifically indicates a distinct trend in how newspapers discuss careers, primarily focusing on particular subjects and attributes. The recurrent use of phrases like 'development', 'business management', 'boardroom', 'head office', 'Silicon Valley', and 'full-time job' in a sample of 1,287 articles suggests a narrow framing of career development, predominantly in high-status, corporate environments. This pattern paints a specific picture of professional life, heavily skewed towards certain prestigious or technologically advanced sectors. Furthermore, the frequent appearance of terms such as 'private sector', 'e-commerce', 'start-up', and 'multimillionaire' in the media narrative also signifies an association of career development with entrepreneurial success and wealth creation. This representation not only highlights a particular career path as the norm but also subtly propagates a notion that careers are primarily about financial success and innovation in specific, often elite, sectors.

This cluster shows a significant bias in media representations of careers, primarily leaning towards a corporate, technology-oriented, and entrepreneurial perspective. This skewed portrayal may inadvertently narrow the public's perception of viable and respectable career options, potentially marginalising other meaningful but less glorified professional paths. This trend raises important questions about the diversity and inclusivity of career narratives in mainstream media and its impact on societal attitudes towards various professions.

Social context

The last overlapping cluster in the comparative analysis of academic literature and print media explores the broader social context of career development. It extends beyond the individual's career journey to consider the social attributes that shape career paths, such as the gender pay gap, pensions, recession, and redundancy. These terms signify a focus on how careers intersect with wider socio-economic issues.

Although the taxonomy of academic literature lacks a direct counterpart to this cluster, the social policy cluster seems to be the one that addresses social aspects within a relatively narrow scope, focusing primarily on policy-related issues. The three main areas of academic research in this cluster are work-family policies, inequality and deviant behaviours. In contrast, newspapers, as evidenced by the data, tend to engage more comprehensively with a range of issues that career development encounters within the broader social and economic context of the labour market. 'Pension', 'recession' and 'redundancy' are the most frequent keywords in this cluster, suggesting a more comprehensive engagement with the challenges and realities affecting career development.

It is important to note that, since 2014, there has been a significant increase in academic research exploring the broader social dimensions of careers which is gradually bridging the gap between public discussions and academic analysis of social and economic aspects of career development. Additionally, it is conceivable that topics related to those in this cluster might be explored in academic literature, potentially under different keywords or frameworks. This evolving landscape suggests that new taxonomies can be developed in academic literature, offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of career development studies in academic discourse.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of prevalent clusters from academic literature and British print media uncovers several similarities in the narrative around career development. Both domains recognise the fundamental role of organisational career development, highlighting the critical interplay between organisational practices and individual career management.

Education emerges as a central theme in both contexts but from slightly different perspectives. Academic literature explores the relationship between education and career development, suggesting a foundational link, and newspaper coverage tends to emphasise the role of education and training as a lever for career advancement. In newspaper articles that discuss education in relation to career development, the emphasis is often on individual's experiences with learning and work throughout their life (Forstenlechner & Baruch, 2012). These articles typically highlight the importance of vocational training,

skill development, and the validation of knowledge through credentials in achieving career success. This focus differs somewhat from broader societal factors such as access to education, systemic discrimination, and social class divisions, which also play a significant role in career development (McWhirter & McWha-Hermann, 2021) but are less emphasised in media narratives. Despite these nuanced differences, the underlying similarity lies in the acknowledged importance of education as a key contributor to career progression.

The discussion of high-profile careers also presents a point of convergence, with both academic and press narratives focusing on careers that receive significant public or professional attention. Academic texts may discuss the characteristics and implications of such careers, while the press often highlights the sectors frequently mentioned in career discussions. This shared focus illustrates a mutual interest in the dynamics of high-visibility, high-status careers and their influence on the normative career development narrative. It becomes clear that the predominant discussion around career development, as depicted in both academic literature and British press clusters, is aligned with the observable power dynamics between different classes in society, revealing a tendency to marginalise the narrative of working-class people from the public discourse. Such an omission can be critically analysed within the framework of social justice, examining how contemporary conceptions of career and the evolving nature of the labour market have served to disempower and effectively obscure a significant segment of the workforce.

Similarly, the representation of organisational career development cluster in print media is indicative of a broader societal tendency to echo existing power structures and systemic biases in career-related narratives. The parallel between academic and press discussions reflects a shared conceptualisation of career development that favours structured organisational progression, a paradigm traditionally associated with white-collar professions. The emphasis on careers within organisations also contrasts sharply with the narrative that has dominated the academic discourse since 1980s, suggesting that organisational careers are old-fashioned and the idea of pursuing a career within a single organisation is outdated.

This media representation not only elevates a particular career path as desirable but also contributes to the shaping of public perceptions about the value of different types of work. The emphasis on white-collar, corporate, and entrepreneurial careers may inadvertently perpetuate the marginalisation of other forms of labour and career development that are vital to the socio-economic fabric.

Finally, the social context cluster in both academic literature and print media shows that career development narratives cannot be seen as isolated stories of individual progression but are closely related to the subjects of social justice, economic cycles, and the collective consciousness, emphasising the importance of understanding career trajectories within the broader societal and economic contexts they unfold within.

Conclusion

The main contribution of this paper is to initiate a dialogue on an interdisciplinary approach in studying career development, placing a special emphasis on the role of media studies. It examined how media narratives intertwined with academic discourse to shape public

perceptions of career development and the empirical findings provided an understanding of how British newspapers contribute to shaping societal perceptions of careers in parallel with academic theories.

Addressing the gap in discursive research on career development and through the lens of media studies, this paper provides an analysis of how media framing reinforces existing societal power structures. It explores the constraints imposed by editorial policies on career-related content in print media. This prompts a discussion about the potential of the press to limit readers' understanding of career development, potentially directing them towards certain career paths while neglecting others – an aspect worth keeping in mind by careers practitioners. This points to a potentially significant gap in understanding of the value of a diverse range of careers. By identifying and critiquing the discrepancies between actual labour market dynamics and prevailing media stories, the paper also encourages career consultants and practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of alternative narratives, thereby broadening their perspective on the subjective aspects of career exploration.

For practitioners, it is essential to be aware of the media's portrayal of career paths and to critically challenge this narrative. The media often emphasises linear career trajectories within organisational contexts, potentially overlooking the richness and diversity of career paths that exist outside these traditional structures. Practitioners should recognise that careers can be multifaceted, evolving in various settings that may not always align with conventional expectations.

Furthermore, the emphasis on formal education and predetermined career ladders can obscure the significant value of practical experience. While academic qualifications are important, the practical skills acquired through direct experience are equally crucial in navigating the complexities of the professional world. Practitioners should question the predominance of this singular narrative and advocate for a more nuanced understanding of career development. By challenging the media's portrayal, practitioners can promote a more inclusive perspective on career success, one that values the amalgamation of different experiences, skills, and learning paths.

Finally, this study's scope necessitates an acknowledgment of certain limitations. While the focus was on the portrayal of career development narratives in British newspapers, this paper has not explored the wide range of other media platforms that also shape career perceptions. Future studies could benefit from exploring social media platforms such as LinkedIn to uncover distinct insights into the discursive approaches that individuals use to portray their professional identities and construct their career narratives. Another limitation due to the comparative approach of this study is that the findings are discussed only in relation to the framework established by Lee et al. (2014), leading to the emergence of several themes that, while relevant, fall outside the scope of this analysis. These additional themes could be explored in future research.

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Article

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The value of asking philosophical questions: Integrating existentialism into career coaching

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Abstract

This article explores the value of career coaches asking philosophical questions, specifically relating to existentialism, in order to enhance clients' self-awareness, goal-setting, and decision-making. It makes a theoretical argument for integrating existential concepts, such as authenticity and essence, into a coach's toolkit to help stimulate, challenge, and shift forwards a client's thinking when faced with difficult career-related questions. Existentialism's value is explored in relation to three established career coaching models – the GROW model, the OSKAR model, and the Skilled Helper model.

Key words: Philosophy; existentialism; career coaching

Introduction

Know thyself. This famous saying, attributed to Socrates, reflects the view that in order to make the best decisions about our lives and understand the world around us, we need to first have a good understanding of ourselves. Knowing ourselves – our character, our nature, our limitations – is, Socrates claimed, the beginning of wisdom. If we haven't explored ourselves, our values, our beliefs, our purpose, our place in and understanding

of the world, how can we expect to make fully informed decisions about the potentially transformational elements of our lives, such as our careers?

In this article, it will be argued that philosophy as a tool to aid career coaching can be integrated into elements of different career coaching models and, in doing so, can help clients to make better informed decisions. There will be a discussion of one branch of philosophy - existentialism - as an example, and an attempt to demonstrate how existential concepts and attitudes align with the core questions that are at the heart of three career coaching models, with a view to arguing that if it can be relevant in this case, then there is potential in other areas too.

There may be many areas of philosophy that can contribute to the field of career coaching, including, but not limited to: value theory, meta-ethics, normative ethics, practical ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, personal identity, rationality, feminism, free will and determinism, metaphysics of mind, and more. There has been much work already in this space, highlighting different ways in which philosophical beliefs underpin and relate to career theories and choices, and a few examples will be touched on here.

Lush explored the relevance of moral philosophy to careers work, examining career practice from the perspective of three different theories of the good (Lush, 2018). Lush argues that careers work is a kind of moral philosophy and that ideas of the good, whilst fundamental to the work that coaches do, are under examined within the careers space. Winter discusses meaninglessness as a philosophical concept, the different elements that may comprise it, and the distinction between what makes actions valuable or meaningful (Winter, 2011). He argues for the relevance of reflecting on these definitions and distinctions when considering our work-related activities. Law argues that philosophy 'addresses issues at the heart of careers work' (Law, 2011, p2) and talks about the need for *why*-questioning, particularly 'when we're trying to position ourselves in the minds of other people' (p1). Affording ourselves the opportunity for self-interrogation, he argues, and considering the process by which we do this, helps us to consider why something might be a good idea. In his book *How to Find Fulfilling Work*, Krznaric (2012) discusses the 'existential hunger' (p7) that was common across the people he met from over a dozen countries whilst doing his research, and the longing that these people had for a job that provides meaning and fulfilment, not just a paycheck. He explores the challenges that this presents both in understanding what fulfilment is, and how to achieve it. This article will argue for the integration of existentialism as a valuable tool for career coaches to employ when approaching these *why*-questions of meaning, purpose, fulfilment, and the good, in order to encourage and stimulate self-interrogation in their clients.

Career coaching is a process aimed at helping a person change in a way they wish, and helping them to find, and go towards, a direction they want to go (AGCAS, 2023). It involves recognizing client's behaviours, attitudes, intentions, values and beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This article will argue that the integration of philosophy into the career coaching space aligns with, and can add value to, the attempt to help clients shift position in a meaningful way, through better consideration and understanding of their own intentions, values and beliefs.

Some of the most powerful questions that a career coach can ask (Forbes, 2018) are fundamentally philosophical, and can be related to different elements of existentialism, for example: What is the most important thing in the world to you, and why? What do

you need most right now? What do you want? What does success look like? Many of the benefits to working with a career coach, including gaining clarity, insight, harmony, fulfilment and thriving (Kauffeld et al., 2022) require a level of engagement with philosophical thinking. Existentialism, when integrated into other areas of coaching, therapy and counselling, is done so with a view to address these powerful questions, and aligns to the aims of career coaching.

The article is divided into five sections. Following on from this introduction, there is a brief introduction of existentialism as a branch of philosophy and some of its main tenets. The next section highlights some examples of the existing integration of existentialism in related fields. Following this, three established career coaching models will be addressed, and it will be illustrated where and how use of existential notions could be integrated into, and thus contribute to, the effective delivery of these. After this, there will be a brief summary of some conclusions drawn.

This article is not endorsing existentialism as a philosophical theory or attempting to make the case that it is in any way *correct* (there are many critiques of existentialist viewpoints from many fields), nor that career coaches should present the existential attitude as the *right way* or only way to approach client's career-thinking. It is merely attempting to establish a theoretical argument for its integration into three career coaching models, and its subsequent value as an additional tool to help stimulate, challenge and shift forwards a client's thinking when faced with difficult career questions.

What is existentialism?

Existentialism is a broad term that defies easy definition. It was not until the 1940s, with Jean-Paul Sartre, that someone explicitly identified as an 'Existentialist.' However, if we delve into history, we can identify a lineage of philosophers who could be considered existentialists in some form or other, including luminaries such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Jaspers.

We must, therefore, be careful when trying to give a precise definition of what existentialism is. As Baggini points out, it "can be misleading to generalize too much about what 'existentialists' have to say about life's meaning, since those thinkers labelled as existentialist differed enormously in their beliefs" (Baggini, 2004, p10). Therefore, it might be more appropriate to best characterize existentialism as an attitude.

This existential attitude could be framed as a broad method of enquiry into how one should live one's life and attempt to find meaning. It could be seen as a reactive position, one that rejects the notions of science and pure rationality as being able to offer complete explanations of human life. The idea of the *human condition* is key to existentialism and suggests that there is something about being human that is shared and that cannot be reduced to, or explained by, physicalism or dualism, for example.

Existentialism challenges the idea that we should attempt to divorce our thinking from ourselves and our experiences. This is a reaction to pre-existing enlightenment philosophies, focused on reason and the scientific method. The dualistic thinking of Descartes, the attempt at pure rationality from Kant, and even the metaphysical claims of Plato, all represent the kind of thinking against which existentialism can be cast.

Existentialism suggests that thinking is never purely, objectively rational, or somehow an activity performed separately from one's own existence. As Feuerbach claims, do not 'wish to be a philosopher in contrast to being a man [*sic*]…do not think as a thinker…think as a living, real being…think in existence' (Tillich, 1944, p.54).

The existentialist does much work simply trying to unravel, dissect and analyse the nature of human experience. Rather than relying on traditional, purely rational arguments to bolster their viewpoints, they draw strength from the commonality of human experiences. Thus, existentialism can be characterised by its quest to understand what a human being is; its attempt to try and unearth and understand many of the shared features of the human condition. The notion of authenticity is central to existential thinking, as is the idea that philosophy is not a disinterested activity that latches on to whatever may appear firm or familiar, but a deeply personal quest for meaning, where individuals navigate the labyrinth of existence in search of their own truths.

Where can we find examples of the integration of existentialism in fields related to career coaching?

In order to support the argument for existentialism as a useful tool in career coaching, this section will briefly highlight some of the ways in which existentialism, or the existential attitude, have been integrated into other forms of coaching, therapy, and counselling. There is clear precedent for integrating existentialism into a range of fields adjacent to career coaching, including leadership coaching, executive coaching, psychotherapy, therapy, counselling, stress management, and coaching more broadly, and there is a body of literature to support this.

A figure that has written widely on the value of integrating existentialism into a range of fields is Emmy van Deurzen, the founder of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC), at which it is possible to study an MA in Existential Coaching. Existential coaching there is defined as 'a uniquely philosophical and deeply relational way of examining the paradoxes and challenges of human existence so as to empower clients to move forward in an authentic and reflective way' (NSPC, 2023). Existential coaches encourage clients to explore a range of existential concepts, such as 'meaning, authenticity, freedom, choice and responsibility' (NSPC, 2023), all of which can be effectively integrated into career coaching models.

van Deurzen (1998) acknowledges the validity and importance of psychotherapists asking questions relating to the dilemmas of human life such as safety versus adventure, and confidence versus humility. In counselling and therapy, she also suggests that taking an existential approach 'involves assisting people to come to terms with the dilemmas of living', acknowledging that 'few people are lucky enough to find a professional who can help them sort out these issues' (van Deurzen, 2001, p13) highlighting the importance of coaches offering this type of approach where possible for anyone experiencing relevant dilemmas of living.

The models for career coaching addressed here all involve some form of goal or aim setting, and van Deurzen argues for this as a benefit of an existential approach to counselling, suggesting that making 'commitments in action and communicating with other people are also considered as part of the progress that people will make towards

the creation of a fulfilling life' (van Deurzen, 2001, p14) but what clients need is 'some assistance in surveying the terrain and in deciding on the right route so that they can again find their way' (p18).

Whitham comments on existential coaching from an executive coaching viewpoint and states that although she does not 'see an existential approach as covering all necessary aspects of coaching, I do see it…can be used in conjunction with other tools to provide what the coachee needs' (Whitman, 2013, p98). She actively supports the idea of offering an existential perspective to a wide audience as 'some ideas and thinking which coaches from all backgrounds can consider and potentially add to their tool kits' (p98).

Kongsted Krum (2012) argues that the existential approach is beneficial for coaching people with work-related stress. She mentions that findings suggest 'that existential coaching can be a way of reducing stress by helping clients understand that openness to experience is a way of gaining insight into their need for control' (Kongsted Krum, 2012, p57). She refers to work by Spinelli and Horner (2008) in which an argument is made for the existential approach as suitable for coaching more broadly, and not just in the counselling and psychotherapy settings. She defines stress as 'a reaction to being under pressure for changing a way of being and…resisting this change because of fear of what may happen' (Kongsted Krum, 2012, p69) and then argues that the coaching relationship in the context of applying an existential approach can be understood as 'a way of teaching the coaching client an existential attitude of openness to experience that will be a possible way of gaining insight into their own worldview and thus being able to make decisions based on this knowledge and awareness' (p69).

Langdridge (2012) argues for the adoption of existentialism and a phenomenological approach within coaching as a modification of the existential therapeutic approach. He argues that the 'key to successful working as a coach is a phenomenological attitude, the use of ideas from existentialism as a heuristic and the steady move towards a goal and solution focussed mode of practice' (Langdridge, 2012, p88). This approach will help the coach get a better sense of the client's strengths and weaknesses, and thus how they 'may be marshalled to achieve the stated goal/s' (p87) they have agreed upon. He argues that the coach's desire and ability to understand the client's worldview is key to their effectiveness, and gaining an insight into a client's concerns regarding choice-making, their own perceived sense of freedom and anxiety, and their ability to make meaning for themselves, is key to the success of their work. Combining this phenomenological approach with a solutions-focussed model, Langdridge argues, will enable a coach to help their clients explore, set and move towards a goal.

In relation to Authentic Leadership Coaching, Fusco et al. (2015) argue that an existential approach creates 'an opportunity for leaders to wonder and take stock of their lives and their leadership, in a way far deeper than is usually permissible in most leadership development interventions' (Fusco et al., 2015, p69). They argue that confronting a client's existing views by considering existential concepts within their coaching can go far beyond other approaches to leadership development and 'have a profound impact on those involved as they contemplate the significant matters of their existence, including their: beliefs, values, meaning, freedom and finitude' (Fusco et al., 2015, p62). They also mention other different forms and applications of coaching in which there has already been work done to argue for the integration of existential ideas, including Neuro-linguistic

Programming (Reed, 2012), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Mirea, 2012), and Mindfulness (Nanda, 2012). When discussing existential coaching more generally, they list the things that a client may expect, including clarity on who they are and what they want from life, exploration of meaningful ways in which to engage their life, and overall 'a better sense of who they are, what they want to become and the kind of life they want to live' (Fusco et al., 2015, p64).

Finally, Jacob (2019) argues that existential coaching helps clients with consideration of 'eternal human questions that we all (some more, some less often) sense at a deeper level in our day-to-day lives. Questions like: How can I be happier? What is the meaning of (my) life? How can I be authentic?' (Jacob, 2019, p2). Jacob argues that these questions are often central to the challenges that clients bring coaches and relate to inescapable elements of the human condition that affect us all, like death, attachment and meaning. As Hanaway mentions in the foreword, 'we live in uncertain times, and we need to find a way to meet that uncertainty in a celebratory way. This lies at the heart of an existential approach' (Jacob, 2019, p22).

Given these different existing approaches of integrating existentialism into related fields, there is scope for its integration into career coaching. This clear precedent supports the claim that elements of existentialism and the existential attitude align with the aims of coaching and counselling more broadly, and that there is crossover with certain aims of career coaching too. Drawing from the applications listed above, the value of integrating existentialism into career coaching will to some degree relate to whether or not the process may help clients to:

- address eternal human questions,
- take stock of their lives,
- consider what they want and how to meaningfully engage in their life,
- gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses,
- develop their perception of their freedom and anxiety,
- develop an openness to new experiences,
- explore their sense of responsibility and authenticity,
- make commitments and communicate these effectively in order to build a fulfilling life.

The next section will aim to demonstrate is that these are all, to some degree, part of a career coach's work.

Where and how could asking philosophical questions, specifically related to existentialism, add value to career coaching?

In order to demonstrate existentialism's value to career coaching, this section will address three established career coaching models - the GROW model, the OSKAR model, and the Skilled Helper Model - and consider a potential avenue for a career coach to integrate philosophy, specifically existentialism, into their practice due to its relevance to the aims of specific elements of each model.

The GROW model

The GROW model (Whitmore, 2009), initially developed by Alexander Graham and popularised by Sir John Whitmore, focuses on helping the client to identify their goals and then move from these, through considerations around reality and available options, towards action planning. Step 1 of the GROW Model – What are your Goals? - aims to identify and clarify a goal that the client wishes to pursue. Reaching this level of understanding effectively, may well involve a directed discussion around ultimate goals, performance goals and progress goals. Helping the client to reflect on their principal aims and aspirations in order to identify those they may wish to action more immediately is involved in this stage of the GROW model. Reflection on ultimate goals and how to formulate them is rare. Here existentialism can offer a valuable tool for insight.

Understanding our ultimate goals as individuals involves asking ultimate questions. Ultimate questions 'are questions about purpose and existence' (RE:ONLINE, 2023) such as: Why am I here? What is my purpose? How should I live my life? And these types of questions are commonplace in many areas of philosophy. When coaching clients on how best to make career decisions, formulate goals, and choose pathways, these ultimate questions underpin any answers that they might give in relation to their aims and aspirations. Considering these questions is important if our clients are to make informed choices about their careers - these eternal human questions affect us all to some degree. If they have not considered what they view as their purpose, or reason for being, how well can they truly make decisions about what career path to take, or job offer to accept?

These types of questions are more effective because they "are 'open', that is they do not imply a correct or expected answer or encourage a minimal response" according to Ali & Graham (1996, p74). They argue that these 'how' and 'what' questions also help because they open up the type of response that can be offered and remove a sense of judgement from the client. Removing the pressure of an expected 'right' answer can help to encourage the client to be more forthcoming in their answers/engagement and help with the balance of control in the discussion – skilful questioning is 'essential to the creation of an empathic relationship' (p78).

As career coaches, understanding the value and context of these types of questions is important if we are to help our clients figure out their goals, as is finding effective ways to ask them, and in both cases, integrating existentialism can act as a useful tool. Here, existentialism is a natural bedfellow because a primary focus of existentialism is ultimate questions concerning the nature of being and the meaning of life. The fundamental question of what it means to *be* is at the heart of existentialism, and at the heart of all that we do, not only within careers coaching – as Heidegger points out, 'the question touched upon here is hardly an arbitrary one' (2010, p1). He argues that this question is integral to our lives. We all *are* in a world that *is*, but have little understanding of what either of these things mean. Considering what it means to *be* is important if we are to have meaningful insight into how we ought to earn our money, invest our time, or find causes to support/believe in. Ultimate questions are at the heart of existentialism, and these considerations from Heidegger could frame an effective line of questioning when trying to begin a discussion around aims, goals and purpose.

Heidegger is particularly interested in being in the human sense, rather than tables or trees for example, and refers to this as *dasein* (Heidegger, 2010) – the human being's kind of

being. The question about the nature of *dasein*, or what it is to be human, is relevant when considering what goals we may hold. We must consider what it means to be human in order to be equipped to explore our aims and aspirations.

This question of what is a human being's kind of being could be explored by a client or coach from many different angles, including religious, sociological, biological, and philosophical, to name but a few. As one line of questioning to a client who is struggling with identifying their goals or purpose, a coach could try to provoke reflection and challenge, by exploring the existential attitude here. Existentialism suggests that we can only attempt to understand our existence by drawing from our existence, not by appealing to anything outside of it. We are human beings, so we must be able to gain some sense of what it means to be human by examining our own experiences. This descriptive aim could help to stimulate thought and reflection on the part of the client, by asking: What does being human mean to you? Given your answer, how do you think that you could do it better? What goals can we establish here related to your career?

Providing this viewpoint skilfully through directed questioning could act as a stimulus to get the client thinking about what it means for them to be a human being and how this may impact their goals and, in turn, choices around their careers and transitions. In addition, given what can often be the subjective nature of career-decision making, integrating this individual focus on what it means to be a human will demand clients ask questions of themselves and encourage self-reflection.

The OSKAR model

One of the ideas at the heart of the OSKAR solutions-focused model is for the coach to help the client 'to be as clear as possible about what's wanted' (Jackson and McKergow, 2006, p1). When engaging in the initial outcomes section of the model, the coach is trying to help the client establish what vision of the future that they want. This may mean asking: What does success look like to you? What is the end goal that you are hoping for? Using tools to help challenge the client to understand better what these are will aid with the client's ability to scale themselves in relation to the outcomes too. Understanding what they wish to accomplish today, and what they hope to achieve in the long term, can require some carefully directed questioning from the coach because clients often do not know exactly what they hope to achieve and can struggle with a lack of self-awareness in this regard. If the career coach is trying to help the client set a desired outcome, and explore what they hope to accomplish in the long term, then employing existential concepts as questioning tools are relevant and applicable to this process.

The notion of essence is one that is used in different existentialists' writing and could be integrated as a relevant tool when using questioning to encourage self-awareness, open-mindedness and understanding of what we want. Sartre uses the illustration of a paper-cutter in order to help explain the idea of essence - 'here is an object which has been made by an artisan whose inspiration came from a concept… the paper-cutter is at once an object produced in a certain way and, on the other hand, one having a specific use' (Sartre, 1987, p13). The essence of an object in Sartre's eyes is its nature, its purpose, its goal. With the paper-cutter example we can see that its essence precedes its existence; the way that the paper-cutter exists is determined and shaped by its given nature and purpose. It has a fixed path and fulfils a certain function. Sartre calls this kind of being a being-in-itself.

Conversely, a *being-for-itself* is a being whose existence precedes its essence; the being has no given nature or purpose. A *being-for-itself* is free to create its own essence. It is condemned to be free, to paraphrase Sartre, because it has not been created for any specific purpose, nor by any craftsperson. Sartre classes human beings in this category; we are each the authors of our own lives. The mistake that Sartre believes many of us to have made is the assumption that our essence precedes our existence – 'if existence really does precede essence, man [sic] is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man [sic] aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him' (Sartre, 1987, p16). And so, as Baggini explains, Sartre argues that we are not like paper-cutters, but more 'like the pieces of flint that just are. We may find uses for ourselves and others, but these purposes do not derive from our essential nature' (Baggini, 2004, p11).

This leaves us with the potentially scary thought that perhaps our lives have no given meaning, perhaps we are without innate purpose or goal. This area poses a challenge to the career coach in how to skilfully work with a client in this space of unease. Here, it highlights the importance of contracting and setting out clearly the fact that the coach will be taking this kind of existential approach whilst agreeing a shared pathway forwards for a session. Ali and Graham (1996) argue for the use of contracting as part of the initial exploration phase with a client as a way to set boundaries, be clear about what expectations are, and build trust as part of a working relationship. The adviser 'should be quite specific in spelling out the agreement and what will be worked on over the time of the interview' (Ali and Graham, 1996, p50) which leads to clients taking ownership over the contract. When integrating existentialism into a session, this spelling out of the agreement would include making the client aware of the potential for this, and doing this from the start - as well as stating it in the booking details prior to the session - would help to address the ethical concerns. It is worth nothing here too that coaches that can artfully bring a client into a space of anxiety and take time to address its ontological nature from an existentialist perspective, Langdridge (2012) argues, rather than exacerbating a problem, can help a client address these complex emotions in a meaningful way.

However, Hanaway acknowledges that this overt approach to existential coaching may put some people off because 'many people carry negative assumptions about the nature of existential thought' (Jacob, 2019, p24). There is work to be done here by a skilled coach to ensure the trust and feelings of safety within the client-coach relationship are maintained by clearly articulating what an existential approach might involve, as well as meeting these feelings of uncertainty in a positive manner. This method of coaching may not be suitable for all clients due to the challenging questions and feelings that it may invoke, which supports the recommendation of existentialism as an addition to a career coach's toolkit, to be utilised when appropriate within an existing coaching model.

According to Sartre, *Bad faith* is the position we find ourselves in if we pretend, even in the face of a lack of meaning, that how we ought to live our lives is not our choice (Sartre, 1987). This involves conforming to another's or your own values without completely freely and consciously willing them as your own - something that many of us do as a matter of routine, and often do not take the time to question. Career goals and choices may be seen by clients as handed to them in some form, or that there is a degree of flexibility but only within certain parameters which are deemed as out of their control. Expectations placed upon clients simply because of a certain group of conditions linked to who they are - e.g.

parents, upbringing, and culture - play a role in decision-making either consciously or unconsciously. Law's (1993) comments on the importance of recognising the 'affective, changing, multi-layered and unique experience of each student and client' (Law, 1993, p299) if a coach is to offer help and enable self-direction are relevant here, and it is important to recognise the differences that clients bring with them to sessions. Using a line of questioning that explores the idea of essence and, subsequently, what they think about the possibility of acting in *bad faith*, aligns well with the aim of trying to get clients to think positively about what they feel responsible for in their lives, what outcomes they are really aiming for, and why they are willing them.

Another fruitful area for exploration that aligns well when considering outcomes with a client could be what Sartre refers to as the *human condition*. By condition he is referring to 'the necessity for him [*sic*] to exist in the world, to be at work there, to be there in the midst of other people, and to be mortal there' (Sartre, 1987, p38). Here Sartre is arguing that although humans do not have a common goal or purpose, we do have common elements to our experience which can influence our conscious thinking when forming our own meaning for our lives.

Considering what are the positive elements of a client's experience as a human being could be a productive way to begin the solutions-focused approach that the OSKAR model promotes. This means asking: What elements of the human experience bring you meaning and a sense of purpose? It is here that the solutions may start to be considered if, in the previous line of questioning, they do not find an innate sense of purpose given to them.

The Skilled Helper model

Within Egan's Skilled Helper Model, there are three recognised stages in career coaching: Exploration, Challenge, and Action-Planning (Egan, 2002). In the exploration stage, the coach uses focused and directed questioning to establish what is going on in the client's current situation and their outlook/views on this. In the challenging stage, coaches encourage clients to look at something from another perspective, and consider how things might look from another point of view. In both of these stages, there are key existential concepts that align and are worthy of integration as part of a philosophical approach to the questioning used by the coach.

Whilst in the exploration stage with a client, directing questions in order to establish the client's own sense of authenticity could be very insightful in order to gain an understanding of how they view their current situation and how much agency they take over the position they are in. The skilled helper enables their client by 'helping them accept their responsibility for becoming a more effective person and helping them to develop their own inner resources' (Nelson, 2007, p2). Questioning the client, therefore, on the issue of the authenticity of their actions - and linking to the issue of *bad faith* as mentioned before – aligns with the aim of helping them to see how they may/may not be accepting responsibility for their actions and who they are.

Thoreau touches upon the idea of authenticity in his book *Walden*, not least when he says that he 'wished to live deliberately' (Thoreau, 2021, p43). This idea of living deliberately, of not simply acting out of conformity or making choices without owned intention, is at the heart of the notion of living an authentic life. As Jacob (2019) argues, these questions around ownership over our own lives are often central to the challenges that clients bring

coaches and relate to inescapable elements of the human condition that affect us all. As such, asking clients questions about the deliberate nature of their choices thus far, or which parts of their current situation they feel were authentically chosen by them, and their corresponding sense of responsibility for their own lives, aligns with the aim of exploring their lives.

Authenticity is a key concept within existentialism and a value that many existentialists promote, hence its appearance in other existential coaching approaches taken, such as van Deurzen (NSPC, 2023). Being authentic involves consciously willing one's own actions and not becoming a victim of *bad faith* – we should not deny 'the possibility of action which really exists' (Kalderimis, 2010, p85). Heidegger describes authenticity using his previous term *dasein* in the sense of being-mine. When *dasein* is authentic then it 'belongs to itself' (Heidegger, 2010, p42). Inauthenticity is to lose or only 'apparently' win oneself. We may do this by denying our possibilities or by being in such a way that is not our own. Entering this concept of authenticity into a discussion as a Skilled Helper aligns with the aim of opening up a client's understanding of themselves, the situation they are in, and the options they feel are available to them.

Authenticity, as standing up for and standing behind what one does, and as owning and owning up to one's deeds as an agent in the world, can also provide a source of meaning and purpose. Meaning can be created as you craft yourself into an authentic being, as you find ways to own and own up to your deeds in the world. This links back to the earlier discussions on the GROW and OSKAR models too when considering what our goals may be and how to go about fashioning them. One could argue that existentialism is, as such, 'a philosophy of hope through reflection and creativity' (Kalderimis, 2010, p83). Encouraging clients to reflect on their own values and, if they lack a clear sense of meaning, to explore the possibility that it can be found through being authentic and creative aligns with the aim of offering them scaffolded support to stimulate/challenge their career decision-making. This idea of existentialism as offering hope also stands in contrast to the pre-conceived negative ideas about it that clients may have which were mentioned earlier – translating this message effectively in the contracting phase would play a role in addressing those pre-conceptions.

When the Skilled Helper moves into the challenging stage 'the client is encouraged to consider new possibilities and perspectives' (Nelson, 2007, p4). Here, to help take the client out of their own viewpoint, integrating existential views on the nature of truth may prove useful as stimuli or discussion points. Perspectivism is an existential view that no one has access to objective truth. All judgements of truth or value are perspectival and, as such, there is no one way of seeing/interpreting the world which is definitively true.

One of the points that Nietzsche (2003) argues is that there is no such thing as one correct and absolute viewpoint. If perspectivism is correct, then we are forced to abandon any hope of claiming absolute knowledge which is directly relevant to a discussion on what the "right" career path is or how one ought to live their life. Open-mindedness is a key part of the existential attitude and is important if one is to challenge one's own viewpoint and thinking effectively. If we pose the question about objectivity to our clients with, as Jaspers suggests, the challenging view that the 'hope of complete objectivity is linked to the hope of utopia… Both are illusory' (Blackham, 1959, p46) then this could open up a rich discussion on our clients' understanding of what constitutes success, the right career

choice, and how they ought to act. Considerations around career success as a construct and its objectivity or subjectivity vary (Heslin, 2005), and affording clients a chance to consider their own understanding of success in relation to Jasper's claim aligns with this aim of challenging client's perspectives and outlook.

Conclusions

Drawing from the examples above, there is space within career coaching models for philosophical questioning, and there is a clear case for coaches to consider integrating a range of existentialism-inspired questions and challenges into their practice. The integration of existentialism into other coaching and counselling spheres further supports the case that it aligns with, and can bring value to, the aims of career coaching specifically. The resulting impact of this upon the ability of the coach to engage with and help their client would appear to be one worthy of further research. Drawing from the existing practice in other contexts in order to create resources for career coaches to add existentialism into their toolkits is also an endeavour worthy of consideration, as is further empirical research based around the effect/results of this type of questioning in a career coaching setting.

Adopting the existential attitude in our questioning approach - engaging the client with a method of enquiry that addresses ultimate questions through an examination of their own feelings, experiences, and relationship to the world - is a way to help a client move forwards in their career-thinking and consider what is of ultimate value to themselves and how best to try to get there with honesty and self-awareness. Existential concepts, such as authenticity and essence, align well with elements of three distinct career coaching models and are valuable additions to a coach's toolkit to help stimulate, challenge and shift forwards a client's thinking when faced with difficult career-related questions.

As a result, this article argues that existentialism, and philosophy more broadly, has a strong potential to help transform a client's assessment of themselves and the world in which they live. The central existential themes that have been considered are all aimed explicitly at challenging our view of ourselves and the world. There is a rich library of existential literature, film and art which could be used to help educate coaches in these concepts and prepare them to introduce the existential attitude as a tool in their career coaching kit.

Our daily lives and routines are lived, often without questioning these deeper themes, but when we face up to why we live life in a particular way - which a meaningful discussion with a career coach will likely involve - and do this with a sense of wonder as existentialism asks us to, this could help to bring about a genuine sense of challenge to one's own thinking, developing our ability to 'know thyself'.

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Article

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Career development: A geographical perspective

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Abstract

Career theory has typically focused on the ways that careers develop over time rather than thinking about the role of place. Drawing from insights from the geographical literature, this paper argues for a much greater attention to the spatial dimension of career development, understanding that place is a fundamental dimension of human existence, and that our careers are enacted in dynamic relation to the places we live in and move through. Further consideration of spatial dynamics, especially in relation to inequalities, should not therefore be considered a peripheral endeavor, but central to elaborating our theoretical understandings of career development.

Key words: geography, place, mobility, career development, career theory

Introduction

In his work on metaphors of career, Inkson (2004, 2007) describes the 'journey' as 'the most common of all career metaphors' (2004, p.103). Explaining the metaphor, Inkson argues that it is 'attractive because of its ability to incorporate two key underlying facets of career: movement between *places*, and *time*' (ibid). However, as I want to argue in this paper, I would suggest that existing theoretical understandings of career development have typically focused on *time* and neglected consideration of *place*. I start this paper by exploring some of the limitations in existing career development scholarship, before

exploring how it is possible to integrate different understandings of place into career development studies drawing on scholarship from the discipline of geography. I finish the paper by pointing to the potential for spatializing career theory such that it more fully accounts for the geographical dimension.

The role of place in career theory

In existing career development scholarship there is very limited consideration of how an individual's spatial position and spatial mobility might impact on their career pathway (Alexander & Hooley, 2018; Inkson & Thorn, 2010; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Killeen (1996), for example discusses the importance of three elements in career theory: agents, environments and career action; or the who, where and what of career theory. Although we might think of 'environment' in geographical terms, Killeen points out that environment has been 'commonly thought of as labour markets, or as occupational structures or as social structures more broadly conceived' (Killeen, 1996, p. 24). These occupational or social structures are arguably often relatively decontextualised, and where they are imagined with a geographical realisation this relates to differences between *national* contexts – the difference say, between qualification requirements and training routes in certain occupations in different countries. Sometimes work that has focused on social contexts, has considered more localised contexts. Law's Community Interaction Theory, for example, clearly considers the role of (localized) community contexts for shaping career interests: 'the way in which who-does-what in society is decided is the product of a plurality of interpersonal transactions conducted in *local settings* [emphasis added], and on the basis of interaction within and between groups of which the individual is a member – the "community"'. (Law, 1981, p. 145).

The clearest geographical consideration of the 'environment' in career theory however is perhaps not in relation to occupational or social structures, but in relation to the labour market, especially in terms of how the spatial distribution of labour market opportunities might influence career development. Here spatial position is understood typically as a facilitator or barrier to career development. Roberts' (1977, 1997, 2009) Opportunity Structure theory for example is clear about the role of geographical position: 'young people's opportunities are governed primarily by the interrelationships between their home backgrounds, educational attainments, *local* [emphasis added] job opportunities and employers' recruitment practices' (Roberts, 1997, p. 345). Roberts' work here is thinking about young people specifically, and these young people are typically understood to have limited choice about their spatial location, however labour markets may also be considered a barrier to adult career development. For adults, spatial limitations are more often understood to be a result of choosing to be based in an area with limited opportunities, Schein's (1990) work on career anchors for example explores the 'lifestyle' anchor which includes an 'unwillingness' to move location typically 'for reasons of integrating personal, family and career issues' (Schein, 1990, p. 32).

I would argue that even in a great deal of more recent theory these tendencies to think about place either in terms of community context, or in terms of the labour market remain. Often these discourses frame place negatively, as a barrier to career progression, and with mobility being thought of positively as a means to increasing prospects. A focus on

spatial inequalities in health outcomes, life expectancies, skills and employment, often through a focus on deprived areas (HM Government, 2022) can reinforce a framing of place in negative terms, such that to 'get on' is linked to 'getting out'. However, this seems to me to be a very narrow way of understanding geographical space, and in my work I have been interested in exploring the potential for a much deeper understanding of the spatial influences on career development (Alexander, 2022). Here, I have drawn heavily on the wider literature on place and space to explore and interrogate existing career theory, and to identify possible theoretical advancements to develop our understanding of geography in relation to career development. It is to this wider literature that I now turn.

A geographical contribution

In thinking about the value of a geographical perspective on career development, first it is important to consider what a 'geographical perspective' *is*. One of the challenges (and potential opportunities) here is that geography as a discipline is unusual in its high level of diversity or 'internal interdisciplinarity' (Schoenberger, 2001, p. 379). This interdisciplinarity is perhaps most clear in the divide between physical and human geography, but we can also think in terms of economic geography, cultural geography and other sub-disciplines all of which offer different contributions to thinking about the role of place. The challenge here is that the high internal diversity of the field of geography means that despite the 'spatial turn' across the social sciences, sometimes engagement with geography by other disciplines 'reduces and flattens geography' (Schoenberger, 2001, p. 380), such that an understanding of place becomes simply 'coordinates on a map' (Ibid, p. 377).

I would argue that the field of career studies is also seeing something of a 'spatial turn', with a growth of interest in this area. However, it seems to me that much of this literature also runs the risk of thinking about geography in a relatively limited way. So for example, Patton and McMahon (2014) suggest that 'geographic location has been underrated as an influence that may facilitate or be a barrier to career development' (Patton & McMahon, 2014, p. 204), and I would suggest that despite their welcome call for greater consideration of geography, there remains a focus on location as a *barrier* or *facilitator* of career development, rather than asking if the meanings and functions of place in career development might extend beyond this.

Gunz and Mayrhofer's (2020) work also makes a welcome call for a focus on career as both spatial and temporal, however their work also does not offer a fully elaborated conceptualization of place. Specifically, they explore 'position' in geographic space, and how career development can involve crossing geographic as well as social boundaries. The concept of geographic space, then, focuses on 'bounded' spaces and often on national boundaries. The focus on boundary crossing and mobility is also apparent in Inkson and Thorn's (2010) call for a greater focus on geographical mobility (and not just occupational or organisational mobility) in the careers literature. They conclude that generally mobility is positive because of the way it allows greater access to opportunities. Again, there is a risk here of adopting relatively narrow understandings of geographic places, focused on spatial distributions of labour markets, and a continued focus on mobility as a positive means of overcoming spatial limitations. Another growing area of interest is the idea that technological innovation and remote working will overcome barriers of space and although

focusing on place, this literature argues that it is of decreasing importance, suggesting that work in the future will become freed from the constraints of location.

In the next sections of the paper, I want to explore the possibilities for building a more elaborated understanding of the role of geographical place in career development. I do this through reflecting on a number of contributions the geographical literature has made to thinking about place and mobility and which are particularly pertinent for career studies. In so doing I argue for an understanding of geography in career development that moves beyond 'coordinates on a map' and ideas of place in narrow terms as a facilitator of barrier to progression.

Experience is inherently spatial

The first point that is raised in the geographical literature around the importance of place, centres on suggesting that place is a fundamental dimension of human existence (Massey, 2005; Simonsen, 2008). This literature has argued that place has too often been treated simply as a 'backdrop' to life, rather than a meaningful dimension in itself. And that place has often been neglected in favour of the dimension of time, with time aligning to a 'progressive project of "becoming"' whereas place aligning to 'stasis and reaction – a passive "being"' (Simonsen, 2008, p. 17). Arguably career theory, has a strong focus on ideas of 'becoming' (in ideas of career progression for example) and therefore it is somewhat understandable that time may have held a particularly privileged position over place in a great deal of scholarship.

Massey (2005) however argues that time and space may be considered to be equally important dimensions of human life, and, crucially, as intertwined dimensions. Here she argues for the idea of 'time-space' recognising that our experiences both exist within time and space – "it is, irretrievably, here and now. It won't be the same 'here' when it is no longer now" (p.139). Embracing this kind of conceptualisation of place and space in career theory, potentially leads to a much wider understanding of the spatial components of career development. Critically career development can be understood as a process that is navigated across spaces and across times. It is not the case that we can think about place in a static way as influencing (just) our immediate opportunities, but the places we have lived in and moved through will have shaped the kinds of opportunities we have had for learning and work, will have shaped our networks and will have shaped our views of ourselves and our futures. This line of argument is critical to the spatio-relational model of career development that I have been working on in recent years (Alexander, 2022) and suggests a much more profound role for place and space than in existing theoretical perspectives.

Place as space made meaningful

A second contribution from the geographical literature is the way that place is not just relevant in terms of spatial distributions of opportunities, or as a 'container' for our experiences, but has meaning in itself. A key argument here made by spatial scholars is about the distinction between 'space' and 'place': space can be understood in relatively abstract terms as representing the relative positions of objects, whereas place is

understood as space made meaningful through human activity (Cresswell, 2004, p. 1890; Relph, 2008; Tuan, 1977). Of course, how space becomes 'meaningful' can be discussed, but one form of meaning is personal, in how we relate to our places, how we see ourselves in relation to our places, and what meanings we attach to different places. On a simple level for example, it is possible to understand how people might have desires to live in certain places that seem to 'fit' themselves or their lifestyles (see for example Savage et al., 2005). There is a connection here to Schein's idea of the lifestyle anchor introduced earlier. However, the critical point here is that rather than lifestyle being an anchor for some and not others, it might be more accurate to understand place as meaningful to people much more widely.

In understanding the meanings of places, it is also possible to reflect on how the places that we live in can shape our ideas of ourselves and of our futures (Prince, 2014). In my work I have thought about this using the Bourdieusian concept of 'habitus' and the theoretical framework of careership (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) to explore how we might internalize aspects of our context, but this is not the only way we can understand how the places we live in might shape our views of ourselves and the world (Alexander, 2022). A range of other scholars have thought about similar issues in relation to spatial 'belonging', thinking about how we negotiate feelings of belonging in our places (Harris et al., 2021). What is particularly interesting to me in this literature is that I also see ideas of 'belonging' and 'fit' as absolutely central to a great deal of career theory. This stems all the way back to the matching theories and how finding a fit between ourselves and workplace opportunities is key to effective career decisions. However it is striking to me that in the existing careers literature we do not consider other forms of 'fit' including spatial belonging.

Arguably a similar limitation is apparent in the spatial belonging literature where although there has been some focus on work as part of being able to 'belong' to a community or a place, this has typically focused on *access* to work and the rights to work (Antonsich, 2010), rather than the nature of work, or career pathways. Here I would argue there is significant scope to think about belonging much more broadly, bringing together literature on spatial belonging and occupational or career belonging. Again as I have argued elsewhere (Alexander, 2022) it is possible to view career as a process always conducted in certain places, and potentially as a means to generate spatial connections and belongings. Different career routes also provide different spatial potentials, with some careers or qualifications facilitating certain kinds of spatial mobility. Fundamentally perhaps spatial belonging and occupational or career belonging may be two sides of what is essentially the same experience of belonging – an experience of fit in our lives, where we feel that we are doing what we want to do in a place where we want to do it (Alexander, 2022).

Spatial dynamics of labour markets

Drawing on the previous discussion, the third contribution from the geographical literature thinks about how place is not an objective, static or neutral feature of our lives. Instead places are dynamic, contested, and actively shaped through our activities and narratives (Lefebvre, 1991). In very practical terms for example, planning decisions about where to situate a school, a road, or a commercial centre have important impacts on people who live in an area. Understanding space as dynamic is very important for extending our understanding of the spatial dimensions of labour markets – moving away from

treating spatial variation as a neutral 'fact' and understanding how labour markets are shaped through human activities and are created and recreated with different spatial configurations. This is a similar point to that made by Schoenberger who argues that focusing on geography simply in terms of co-ordinates on a map means that:

> 'Any sense of history in and of place – of how cultures and societies write themselves onto the earth and how both the environmental and the social are transformed in the process – is lost.' (2001, p. 377).

What Schoenberger is pointing to here is the importance of a geographical awareness for understanding how human activity (labour markets for example) do not just exist but are created. They emerge out of human decisions.

A geographical perspective can, therefore, highlight how labour market dynamics are spatialised. In contemporary times for example, it has been pointed out how despite discourses of the decreasing importance of space, global capitalism is shaping our local experiences, including what kinds of work is available and where (Robertson, 1995). Localised labour markets are not natural emergences but are results of political and social dynamics as they occur across space – sometimes termed the 'socio-spatial dialectic' (Soja, 2010). This is particularly important in career theory because as theorists like Massey (2005) and Farrugia (2019) have shown, the spatial dynamics of labour markets intersect with spatialised dynamics of inequality, creating, for example, localised experiences of gender (McDowell & Massey, 1984), or of youth (Farrugia, 2019), or other inequalities. Where career theory and career guidance practice have a longstanding interest in issues of inequality, I would suggest that there is a risk of overlooking an important part of the puzzle if spatialised dynamics of inequality are not more fully taken into account.

Creating our spaces through work

Understanding how places are dynamic and shaped by human activity also points to a fourth contribution from the geographical literature: consideration of how we as individuals engage dynamically with places, shaping our own engagements with place and creating our own sense of meaning from the spaces we live in and move through. That is, we are not simply at the mercy of the places that we find ourselves in. In a very practical sense for example, we might consider the ways that individuals might actually generate opportunities for work in their spatial contexts, rather than simply having to take what is available. This is clear for example in how entrepreneurs can create new businesses and new employment opportunities in the places that they live, and how intrapreneurship might contribute to business development. In much contemporary scholarship on career guidance for social justice, the ways that career choices have impacts on the world has been discussed, including the possibility of supporting individuals to identify how they can go about 'changing the world' (e.g. Hooley, 2015). As a result, it is possible to think of the ways that career choices can have implications in the creation of places and spaces, both on a societal level (impacting on the places and opportunities within them) and on an individual level (in the ways that we engage with our spaces, and how we feel about them). It is also the case that the choices we make in relation to our places – where we move to, or how we engage with our local communities – for example might create different potentials

for future working lives. How we engage with a place for example might help us feel a sense of belonging or not, might bring us into contact with different people, and different opportunities. These points highlight the diverse possibilities for engaging with places, or engaging with different places, and this emphasizes the plurality of spatial experiences.

Mobilities and spaces

Understanding time and space as intertwined dimensions, a fifth contribution from the geographical literature, is an argument to break down the conceptual division between place and mobility. As I have already discussed in much career theory place is understood in a relatively static way in relation to labour market constraints, and mobility is understood as a way of overcoming these spatial constraints. However, drawing on the work of Massey (2005) and others we might understand that mobility is not a way of overcoming place, but is actually in itself a spatial experience – it is a journey through time *and space*. It is not the case that anyone ever 'escapes' the constraints of place for example, because all our experience is spatialized. This also helps draw our attention to different forms of mobility practices in relation to work: moving away to live elsewhere is one form of mobility, but equally so is commuting, or working away from home for a period of time, or even a temporary residential move. Our career choices then might be understood not as framed (just) by our residential location, but as framed by different forms of mobility decision and mobility practices, and different mobility practices might potentially be connected to different kinds of spatial and career aspirations.

Again, inequalities are relevant here. Who is able to move and in what ways depends on resources. Sometimes in the literature this is termed 'mobility capital' (Corbett, 2007). To live in one community and work in another requires the ability to pay for travel for example, and it might involve being able to drive. However, inequalities are complex, and as well as mobility being a part of being able to access work, work might also require or facilitate mobility in ways that exacerbate inequalities. In a recent news story for example issues of low paid care staff being inadequately remunerated for travel time was highlighted (Jones, 2023); however at the other end of the scale, in jobs that require some global mobility, mobility might be seen as a 'perk' of a job. Further, in some jobs or educational courses where global mobility is possible, these mobilities may act in themselves as a form of capital and provide ongoing career benefits. Having a 'global outlook', for example, is often something that is valued by employers. Because of the ways that these kinds of global opportunities are often only available to a select few, these kinds of mobilities can effectively support the reproduction of social inequalities (Brooks & Waters, 2010). Here we can again see how geographical understandings might considerably enrich the theoretical consideration of equality and social justice in career theory.

Beyond employment: spatial lives

Thinking about the spatial dimensions of our lives, a sixth contribution of geographical understandings to career studies is about how the wider (non work) parts of our lives have a spatial dimension, and can frame our spatial decisions, and also our career decisions in relation to those spaces. Drawing from the literature on 'geographies of care' for example, one key consideration is the ways that caring relationships are conducted in and through space. Of particular importance in relation to mobility is that where our partner is based,

or our children, or our (ageing) parents or grandparents, is important in spatial decisions (Alexander, 2022). But again, thinking about mobilities, it is important to understand spatial decisions as complex, and often involving different kinds of mobility practices. That is, we do not just move to be near a partner and then experience restricted opportunities, but we might perform different kinds of mobility in relation to these relationships – we might, for example, live at some distance from our parents or grandparents, but travel regularly to see them or to support them. We might conduct distance relationships for a period of time, or we might choose to live close to our partner or those who require care, but commute for work. The ways that our careers are embedded in our wider lives, and the kinds of negotiations we make around how we balance our life roles are well recognized in career theories, including Super's (1980) rainbow model. However, drawing from the geographical literature it is clear that the ways these roles are negotiated has a spatial dimension.

Alongside the spaces of relationships, there is a growing interest in housing and how it shapes life opportunities, and here it is important to recognize that the availability and costs of housing vary across different spaces. In relation to career development, this raises awareness of how lower salaries in one region might be counterbalanced by lower housing costs (Ball, 2019). This raises questions about whether prioritizing job progression or salary would always improve economic outcomes, if this means moving to another area with higher housing costs. Questions about how people navigate their housing and career transitions in tandem might also be raised (Hoolachan et al., 2017). And inequalities again become a focus, recognizing that families are often a source of housing especially for young adults, and where family homes are based can provide different access to the labour market (Milburn, 2009). A geographical perspective therefore highlights that other aspects of our lives, not just our working lives, are conducted in and through space, and raises questions about the implications of these dynamics for our career pathways.

Beyond spatial 'containers'

A final contribution from a geographical perspective to understanding place in career development, is in terms of scalar dynamics. In existing career theory, as I discussed earlier in this paper, there is a tendency to think in terms of bounded communities or labour markets, which might seem to suggest that everyone lives in neat geographical boxes. However, this overlooks two very important points. Firstly, that individuals exist in very different relationships to their places. They have different histories, different mobility trajectories and different social connections; they are classed, gendered and have different ethnic backgrounds; they might live in the same sorts of spaces, but they might experience and engage with these places quite differently. Secondly, thinking in terms of spatial 'containers' – regions, cities, districts, even streets – overlooks the scalar dynamics of place, that place exists at lots of different levels. Geographical perspectives for example, have done a great deal to highlight the importance of micro-geographies, and in career theory this might involve thinking not just about national or regional labour markets or communities, but thinking on a much smaller scale of the spatial dimensions of our working lives. This might include the specific buildings, rooms and desks or work stations where we conduct our work, and the kinds of mobilities we enact within these spaces. These perspectives highlight the importance of work in creating and being shaped by spatial dynamics on a highly localized level. To give an example, it is possible to consider

how changes to an office environment such as moving to 'hot-desking' might change the spatial dynamics of how work is practiced in the immediate environment and open up consideration of how power dynamics might play out within a workplace, in relation to the *spaces* of that workplace.

Conclusions: Towards a geographical perspective of career

Having introduced a number of points of reflection from the geographical literature, I want to returning to Inkson's metaphor of the career journey. Through this paper, I hope that I have demonstrated how exploring geographical scholarship can help to really focus on the spatial dimension of our career journeys. Through exploring seven contributions from the literature, I have sought to demonstrate how geographical perspectives address a tendency in existing career scholarship to think about place in static terms as a backdrop or container of different kinds of opportunities or communities. Instead, I have demonstrated how thinking about time and place together – as time-space – helps to highlight *spatial* dynamics of career development. Places are dynamic: they change, they are created and recreated through human action. And equally, the ways people engage with their places is dynamic. We move through spaces, and we engage with and change our places.

Career is one key means by which we engage with, and potentially change our places and our relationship to our places. But equally it is important to recognise how the spaces we live in and have moved through shape our careers, influencing the ways that we think about ourselves and our opportunities. I have also explored the evidence that inequalities have a spatial dimension, and through this have argued that there is a need to advance understanding of how career practices potentially mediate the spatial dynamics of inequality. A final contribution of this paper is that I have identified how spatial dynamics are critical in a number of different dimensions of life, including relationships and housing, and how any understanding of the spatial dynamics of career has to move beyond a narrow focus on simply working opportunities. All of these ideas point to the potential for further theoretical elaboration of the role of place and mobility in career development.

Throughout this paper I have highlighted particular ways in which I have built upon geographical ideas as part of my theoretical work in exploring place and career development (Alexander, 2022). However, I believe that there is also ample room for further scholarship, some indications of which have been given in this article. Alongside an argument that has focused on the value of a geographical perspective on career theory, I hope that I have also shown in this article more broadly how interdisciplinary curiosity is a valuable means of critiquing and enriching the field of career studies.

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Article

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Developing interdisciplinary habits of hand, heart, and mind for career development practitioners

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Abstract

Within an edition of this journal that is looking at the contribution of differing disciplines to the study and practice of career development, this article explores the notion of career as explicitly *interdisciplinary*, and examines different understandings and implications of that. From here, it uses Shulman's ideas of surface, deep and implicit 'signature pedagogies' to consider what our interdisciplinarity means for the training of career development practitioners, suggesting reflective practice, criticality, reflexivity, and communities of practice as core concepts. It ends with scoping out some priorities for further consideration and arguing for NICEC's role in articulating the habits of hand, heart, and mind involved.

Key words: interdisciplinarity; career development; pedagogy

Introduction

Dictionary definitions of 'discipline' cover the dual meaning of the term: to control and channel behaviour and to scope a particular branch of knowledge, particularly in the context of higher education study. In the same way, 'subject' has a sense of dominion and control to it as a way to establish boundaries around an area of study. In this journal edition, several articles have looked at disciplines of study and their contribution to career development, which begs questions about the disciplinary status of career development itself: is it a discipline in its own right, bounded and distinct from others? Is it some sort of blend of other disciplines? And what are the implications of this for how it is studied, for

those learning to manage their careers but in particular for those learning the practice of facilitating career development learning, i.e. career development professionals.

Debate about aligning career development with disciplines often focuses on the former: what is the relevance of disciplines in teaching career development to those who are studying a particular subject. When career development content is being integrated within a degree programme, for example, alignment with the subject of study can engage learners, make connections and provide legitimacy. However, as regards the study of career development practice, this article explores the notion of career as explicitly *interdisciplinary*, and examines different understandings and implications of that. From here, it considers the connection of discipline and profession, and the implications of our interdisciplinarity for the 'signature pedagogies' involved in the training of career development practitioners. It ends with scoping out some priorities for further consideration.

Career development as interdisciplinary

The first question to pose must be: is career development interdisciplinary? To answer this, we need to surface the boundaries of disciplines and subjects that we all use as mental maps of knowledges, and which provide so much of the structure of formal education: syllabi, qualifications and organisational units like university departments being based around them. The human desire to sort and code into silos that can be mastered belies an interconnectedness and messiness we find in practice. So, whilst these disciplinary boundaries are often not as secure as they might first appear once we start noticing them, they do still provide structures through which norms are communicated, power is exerted, careers are developed, and resources are distributed. There is a perennial tension between our disciplinary affiliations which inform ways of thinking and the drive to push boundaries and innovate.

Initial and continuing professional development training programmes for career development practitioners in UK Universities are commonly co-located with broad social science clusters such as schools of health and social care or social policy. Some might identify with education and others with strands of psychology such as vocational, counselling or organisational. I hold my own location within a Centre for Lifelong Learning to heart, given the importance of guidance to adult learning choices. However, I posit that we can all broadly accept that we can draw on different disciplines to theorise about career development, and this makes us interdisciplinary by nature.

Even when 'career studies' is co-opted into the field of business and management, the contribution of different disciplines is at least acknowledged. In their introduction to the *Handbook of Career Studies*, management scholars Gunz and Pierperl (2007), draw attention to the broad range of tributaries flowing into one river of career development: citing vocational psychology, sociology, organisation studies, economics, narrative theory and more. A later chapter (Moore et al., 2007) points to roots which are sociological, vocational and developmental. They highlight significant contributions from

- Chicago School sociologists, whose used the word career more broadly than referring to middle-class paid jobs,

- differential psychologists who developed testing tools to support a matching process in the practice of vocational guidance, and
- scholars of life course development, who have explored the significance of life stage and ongoing adaptation across the life span and space.

In the same handbook, Peiperl & Gunz (2007) claim 'career studies' as a sub-category of organisation studies and see this as where it has 'gone legitimate' (p.1) since the 1970s. Perhaps legitimacy is a result of being 'disciplined'. However, those earlier tributaries and trajectories reveal a body of work with shifting philosophical underpinnings. Early work, with its emphasis on matching aspects of the person and the environment, was underpinned by positivism. The shift to a developmental process still assumes generalisability of life stage and span. More latterly, constructivist and social constructionist understandings of how meaning is made through cognitive processes and interaction with the social world have developed. These foreground ongoing processes of learning and decision making with individual action in unpredictable, uncontrollable and constantly shifting contexts. The focus remains on the individual as central player, but the complexity of the game is recognised. More recently, the power dynamics within dominant neo-liberal ideologies are critiqued and the emphasis that placed within organisational studies on certain types of roles and organisations been called out for having 'put the agentic individual centre stage' (Mayrhofer et al., 2020, p.329) attending to 'a limited diversity of career settings' (p. 328). A renewed focus has emerged on the meaning of work across a wider range of global populations and contexts, reflecting differences in economic, political and social contexts with widespread inequality, precarity and disadvantage (Arulmani, 2014; Blustein, 2019; Ribeiro, 2021; Sultana, 2017).

This rudimentary review serves to demonstrate that all of these disciplinary perspectives are partial. Some focus on the individual as agent at the expense of context. Others, in turn, emphasise structural constraints from context at the expense of the leverage of the individual. More problematically, some limit themselves (consciously or unconsciously) to particular types of contexts. This incompleteness relates also to underpinning *epistemologies*; that is, the assumptions about how knowledge is generated within that field. The bulk of research on which the classic theories are based have been large quantitative studies where differences between elements of large samples are examined to generalise objective truth. Moreover, most of these studies were undertaken in what Henrich et al. (2010) coin as WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic) contexts.

With such a broad range of theories at our disposal, to use them we need to engage in what Kidd (2006) calls either 'technical electicism' or 'theoretical integration'. My contention is that looking at career as interdisciplinary can only help both the widening of scope and this integration. For example, the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development (Patton and McMahon, 2021) provides us with a 'meta-theoretical framework' that claims to hold all extant theory and its range of epistemological underpinnings. Central to the framework is the individual in context, indicating the recursive influencing of components across all parts of the two open systems: the individual and the social/societal.

As discipline crossing has become more explicitly discussed in the academy, we can compare our experience in career development with other work to bring disciplines together. For example, Shepherd (2017) highlights that the sort of systemic mapping

developed by Patton and McMahon is a common feature of transdisciplinary projects: a clue that we have found some common ground. A significant contribution to defining terms was made by Stember (1991) in her article '*Advancing the social sciences through the interdisciplinary enterprise'*. Here she specifies the following continuum of disciplinary boundary crossing:

Intradisciplinary: working within a single discipline.

Crossdisciplinary: viewing one discipline from the perspective of another.

Multidisciplinary: people from different disciplines working together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge.

Interdisciplinary: integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines, using a real synthesis of approaches.

Transdisciplinary: creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives.

Jensenius (2012) has turned this into a neat visualisation (Figure 1):

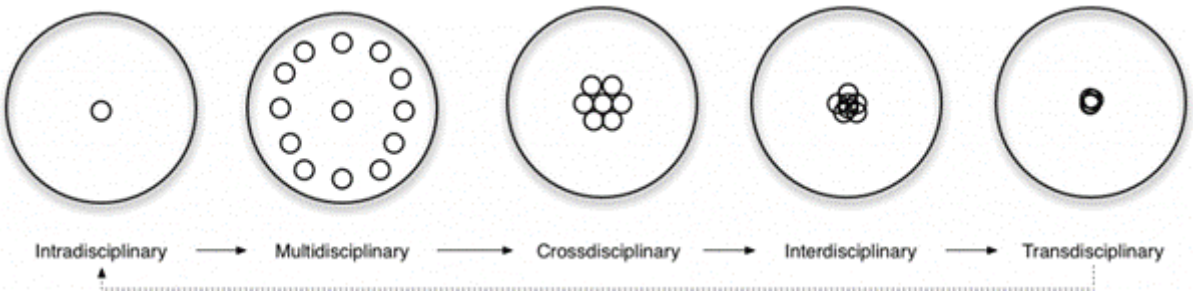

Figure 1. Different disciplinarities (Jensenius, 2012)

Linking back to Gunz and Pierperl's (2007) river metaphor – they seem to be speaking of transdisciplinarity where integration is such that the origins of each droplet of water is no longer evident. I am perhaps more inclined to consider our current state as 'interdisciplinary', where, as scholars and professionals we can still see the contours and the distinctions of the disciplines. Whilst this leaves us short of a 'unity of intellectual frameworks', it does allow for synthesis. It also enables us to use those contours and distinctions as tools to evaluate them, when we choose to, or reject them if needed.

Shifting the kaleidoscope (another metaphor) we can identify a further axis of interdisciplinarity: the bringing together of theory and research, policy and practice as equal parts of career development. These three elements and their intersection are all important in their own way in the training of career development professionals. Interdisciplinarity has been advocated across all domains: in 2018, European career development scholars laid out a research agenda for career development that advocated for an interdisciplinary proactive approach that engaged fully with global issues (Weber et al, 2018) and asks conceptual questions about the purpose and meaning of career development work in practice. It seems that as a community we are committed to using the different cognitive maps that disciplines give us in order to work across disciplines but also across a theory/practice divide. And as Lauder and Neary (2020) note, theoretical

integration was a core argument for the upskilling of the profession through the establishment of a level 6 qualification requirement (Careers Profession Task Force, 2010).

To explore this further, we move to on to consider how the interdisciplinarity contributes to teaching and learning on training programmes for career development practitioners. By examining the initial training and ongoing professional development of career development practitioners we can hunt for clues not only about how different subjects are integrated in career development work but also about how theory and practice gaps are averted.

Signature pedagogies of career development?

The disciplinary differences discussed above are all reflected in how disciplines are taught. Shulman (2005) coined the term *signature pedagogies* to explore these differences and suggests that by identifying them we can usefully identify the habits that serve to reconstruct, legitimise and promote such bounded thinking.

Schulman maps out signature pedagogies at surface, deep and implicit level and argues that all these develop in the learner habits of hand, mind and heart. It is through these habits that learners are socialised into disciplines. Surface signature pedagogies relate to the specific teaching and learning activities engaged in (from case studies to labs, debates to group projects), whereas deep signature pedagogies are the frameworks used to consider how knowledge becomes known. Implicit signature pedagogies relate to our epistemologies: our beliefs and values about learning and about what counts as knowledge. As Schulman writes:

> 'We internalize our disciplinary Signature Pedagogy when we study and are trained in a particular discipline/profession. Through routine or practice, we come to embody this Signature Pedagogy without having to think about it' (p56).

So, what are its surface, deep, and implicit dimensions of teaching career development? There is not an extensive literature on the pedagogy of career development practice, but clues can be read into policy documents and other frameworks available. *What* is taught to career development practitioners can be read into artefacts like the National Occupational Standards maintained by the Career Development Institute or the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the Apprenticeship standard.

Alongside this we can consider *how* career development is taught. I suggest that our teaching is characterised by signatures of reflective practice, critical thinking, reflexivity and the formation of learning communities.

Reflective Practice is a key component of much career development training. Reid (2016) notes that many professions pay lip service to reflective practice, but I contend that we walk the walk, using reflective practice models as a major plank of career development practitioner training to learn from experience and develop critical reflection. This criticality speaks to the role of context on the career development of people we support, and the importance of practitioners being able to think critically about the inequalities, injustices and barriers that many face. As part of this, practitioners need awareness of their own positioning within wider systems and are therefore encouraged to develop their reflexivity. Finally, practitioners are prepared and equipped for collaborative working with colleagues

and stakeholders through the focus on communities of practice. Learners give and receive feedback extensively, draw on their own career and practice reflections and share these with others.

In my own institution, the 'surface structure' of our blended learning modules, where online delivery of resources and on campus workshops combine to support students, indicates a deep signature that assumes learners are technologically enabled and proficient enough to access resources, geographically disparate from campus and able to find time across subsequent months for private study and preparation of an authentic assessment tasks. Of course, these assumptions need to be checked and challenged to ensure our pedagogy isn't excluding some types of learners. Further deep signatures reflect a commitment that learners be actively engaged and a belief that this is best achieved by negotiating and agreeing a 'learning alliance' (McCash, 2021). This mirrors the way practitioners will work with clients where goals, tasks and bonds (Gysbers et al., 2014) are agreed up front and reviewed. Implicit to this are professional ethics that practitioners are focused on the needs of their clients, a key professional value and disposition that we cultivate. These signatures also feed through to assessment, with authentic professional assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the career development practitioner through recordings, reflections and artefacts, bridging any theory-practice gap. All of these have implications for curriculum design, delivery, class sizes, resourcing, recruitment of tutors and more.

All these signatures are present in one particular example of a class based activity which fosters community, criticality and reflection as well as a focus on theoretical integration: bringing the systems theory framework to life. An adapted socio-drama activity developed by Mary McMahon allows learners to simulate a career guidance setting and work together to construct a dynamic visualisation of social and contextual systems' recursive interaction. A further example would be the collective academic supervision model developed at Aarhus University (Nordentoft, 2023) where practitioner researchers work in groups to share their dissertation progress and give and receive feedback.

Writing about nurses, Dow et al remind us of the socialising function of signature pedagogies:

> 'Signature pedagogies are the central vehicle by which educators socialize individuals into a profession. They are the teaching handprint that conveys to learners: this is how we learn in our profession, and this is what we value'. (Dow et al: 2021, p.649)

As such, they tie learning to professional identity and values, building communities of practitioners who support and challenge one another. Once again, this is a potential signature of career development programmes in the networks of professionals that are created and maintained.

There is potential, then, that greater and clearer articulation of the signature pedagogies of our field can enable us to explore and develop the characteristics of the career development professional. Career development's own interdisciplinary signature pedagogies should be further articulated so as to capture their potential as an antidote to Shulman's 'pedagogical inertia' (p57). We model integration, interaction, and collaboration between the pedagogies of different disciplines as we develop our own habits of the mind, of the heart, of the hand (or knowledge, skills and behaviours).

Conclusion

I am advocating that we map out our signature pedagogies and trace that back to the claim of interdisciplinarity. In career development we draw appreciatively on a range of different disciplines with their epistemological differences as all having something to offer and we see value in looking together at theory, policy and practice. We centre the learner reflexively as they are learning a practice just as we centre the individual client in career development work. The emancipatory potential of career development work and the importance of systemic perspectives (acknowledging the interplay of all influences in the individual, social and societal environmental systems that the systems theory framework depicts) are further potential signatures.

To do this, we need access to professional communities that bring together scholars, researchers, policy makers and practitioners in dialogue. An awareness of interdisciplinarity is behind such spaces being integrative and collaborative rather than tribal and inert. With its breadth of scope, I believe NICEC as an organisation and the intellectual stimulus of this Journal can provide such as space. I hope that together, we can specify pedagogies best linked to the habits of hand, heart and mind of the career development professional.

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News

Call for papers

Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling

Future Issues of this Journal

The **Autumn 2024 issue** will focus on the theme of 'sustainability and career development'. This issue will be edited by Tristram Hooley and will draw on inputs to the NICEC Conference in July.

The **Spring 2025 issue** will be an open call issue, with articles addressing diverse topics related to career development.

Submissions can be made on the Journal online open access platform: www.nicecjournal.co.uk

Full author guidelines and editorial policies are available here: https://www.nicec.org/pages/24-nicec-journal

In order to encourage contributions from practitioners, research students, and service leaders, the Journal is now accepting short article contributions (1,200-2,500 words), with some flexibility around their format.

Full length articles (4000-6000 words) will be expected to include strong academic content.

They may be empirical or discursive.

News

Forthcoming events | NICEC

NICEC offer a series of early evening seminars and longer network meetings during the year. Below you will see details of events from March 2024 onwards. Most of the events are via Zoom but we will be hosting a face-to-face Conference in Birmingham in July 2024.

Full details of NICEC events are available at https://www.nicec.org/pages/10-events

Cost of Seminars and Network Meetings:

- Included in membership fees for NICEC Fellows and members.
- For non-members: £25 for seminars and £35 for network meetings
- For students: £4 for seminars and £7 for network meetings

21 May 2024 2pm-5pm

Remembering the legacy of Ronald Sultana (Network Meeting)

24 June 2024 5pm-6.30pm

Bill Law Award and Celebration

2-3 July 2024

Sustainability and Career Development: NICEC Conference, Birmingham

16 September 2024 2pm-5pm

The role of work experience in Career Development (Network Meeting)

21 November 2024

Seminar - Topic to be confirmed

Forthcoming events | CDI

Full details of CDI events are available at www.thecdi.net/training-and-events

The UK Career Development Awards 2024

Tuesday 18 June, The Museum of Making, Derby

Join us for this in-person event, which is being held on Tuesday 18th June 2024, at the Museum of Making Derby.

The UK Career Development Awards are a high point in the CDI event calendar, when we recognise and celebrate excellence across the career development sector, in the UK and internationally.

The cost of the ticket includes:

- Welcome Drink
- 3 course meal
- 1/2 bottle of wine with dinner (non-alcoholic option available)
- Tea & Coffee

The National Careers Leaders Conference 2024

Wednesday 19 June 2024 at the University of Derby

The National Careers Leaders Conference and Exhibition 2024, is kindly sponsored by Unifrog, is jointly organised by the CDI and iCeGS at the University of Derby.

ABOUT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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

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

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

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

Below are a few of our major achievements:

- A powerful brand supported by an evolving website **www.thecdi.net**; social media (Twitter and LinkedIn) presence; and quarterly magazine *Career Matters*;
- A schedule of CPD, skills training, webinars and conferences based on market analysis and members' training needs;
- A growing media and lobbying presence with the CDI recognised as the *expert voice* in the field; advising politicians, speaking at conferences and commenting on policy;
- The establishment of the UK Career Development Awards – ten sponsored awards including *Careers Adviser/Coach of the Year* and *Careers Leader of the Year and Lifetime Achievement Award*;
- Clear focus on professional identity and increasing the professionalism of the sector through our influence, ownership and development of the QCD and QCG/D and the CDI Academy including the new *CDI Certificate in Careers Leadership*.

ASSURING QUALITY

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

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

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

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