

Successful Career Decision-Making of Young Canadians in a Digital Economy

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Abstract

Young Canadians are making career decisions in a labour market context that is being transformed by technology and digitization. The rapid, unbalanced shifts brought on by technology and automation have left gaps in knowledge related to how young people are navigating their career decisions considering the emergence of the digital economy and the way career practitioners can best support young people in successfully exploring career options. This study explored factors that helped and hindered 14 young adults who self-identified as doing well navigating career decision-making within the multiple options, opportunities, and challenges posed by the digital economy. Through the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), a qualitative research method, seven categories were identified to house the 147 incidents participants described as helpful and hindering: (a) access, awareness, and education, (b) interpersonal factors, (c) social media and career related platforms, (d) digital technology, (e) workplace and environmental factors, (f) flexibility, well-being, and resources, (g) intrapersonal factors. The findings highlight specific personal, relational, and contextual factors that have helped

and challenged young adults in career decisions considering the impact of digitization. Implications for career practitioners and educators are discussed, followed by directions for future research.

Keywords: Digitization, digital economy, COVID-19, career development, career counselling, young people, enhanced critical incident technique (ECIT)

Increasing digitization and automation in the past decade have transformed the world of work and the economic activities that influence the job market. The coming decade is preparing for even more significant shifts due to technological developments in artificial intelligence, advanced data analytics, Internet of Things, telepresence, synthetic biology, blockchain technologies, and decentralized production technologies such as 3D printing (Policy Horizons Canada, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the shift toward the use and reliance on technology in a wide diverse range of industries and career fields (Cheshmehzangi, 2021). These changes are transforming people's careers in historically unparalleled ways.

The significance of digital technologies heralding the 'fourth

industrial revolution' (Schwab, 2017) is recognized as one of the sixteen emerging global challenges identified for the next generation in Canada (Policy Horizons Canada, 2018). The notion of traditional occupations that have provided vocational stability is vanishing, and university students are being trained for occupations that are yet to be discovered (Livingstone, 2018). The higher-than-average remuneration for IT professionals and the increased demand for such jobs in comparison to other jobs (Statistics Canada, 2019) bear testimony to the pressure faced by young people in making career decisions that defy the traditional notion of selecting career paths that match interests, values, attitudes, and personality. One of the many effects that workers in the digital economy face is the looming fear of unemployment and the pressure for skill development that might be beyond the scope of many workers' means or abilities (Balsmeier & Woerter, 2019). Despite these challenges, there are also people who are adapting to these rapidly evolving changes (CERIC, 2023). What we can learn from these individuals constitutes the focus of this study.

The Digital Context

The “digital economy” refers to the emergence of digital technologies that have transformed the way in which the production, delivery, and consumption of goods and services are carried out. The digitally enabled marketplace uses online platforms for exchanging and transacting merchandise, services, and finances. The newer business models based on digital technologies (e.g. e-commerce & online shopping) have synced well with how social media channels help to create networks of business agents and consumers across the globe (Loranger, Sinclair, & Tebrake, 2018). These changes are impacting the economic indicators with implications for career development. Statistics Canada (2019) reports that in the last decade “the nominal GDP of digital economic activities (+40.2%) grew at a faster pace than the overall economy (+28.0%)”.

While the impact of such a transformation is being experienced in multiple spheres of our lives, the implication of this change for career development has yet to be identified. Many employees are experiencing, or have already experienced, the shock of the digital revolution through layoffs and are also under pressure to upgrade their skills to keep up with the inevitable change. The percentage of automatable jobs in Canada is predicted to range from 35% to 42% (Arntz et al., 2016; Deloitte

& HRP, 2017). Young people are witnessing the impact of digitalization on career and the potential disappearance of traditional occupations that were once the “bread and butter” of previous generations. Some examples of jobs that are at high risk of automation include accountants, insurance brokers, paralegal professionals, and real estate agents (Deloitte & HRP, 2017). On the other hand, jobs that are related to the digital economy have grown more than four times in comparison to job growth in the overall economy (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Scholarly literature around career development as applied to digitalization and automation is only picking up momentum within the last few years and in a limited way. The major highlight has been the emphasis on the impact of this major economic and social change to the nature of work, the disappearance of jobs, the modality of conducting business, and the emergence of newer occupations (Ford, 2015; Medici et al., 2023b). There is also a reference to how the structure of society is anticipated to change due to digitalization and automation. For example, Hirschi (2018) predicted that occupations that are likely to fall prey to automation are the ones that have been traditionally carried out by middle and lower-skilled workers. This prediction is further supported by Balsmeier & Wortzer (2019), who found that investment in machine-based digital technologies was positively

associated with employment for high-skilled workers and negatively associated with the employment of low-skilled workers. Although the authors reported an overall positive net effect on employment, they warn about the expected increase in inequality between those with and without technological skills and abilities. Findings such as these contribute to warranted concern for increased job polarization and the proliferation of the gig economy (De Stefano, 2016). Research has since begun exploring various factors influencing how workers are adapting to deal with changing work environments and technological advancement, including technological self-efficacy and occupational mobility intentions (Medici, 2023a).

Digital Divide

The digital divide is a broad term referring to the gap between demographics that have access and those who do not have access to the internet and modern technology (Warschauer, 2003). More sophisticated understandings of the digital divide have been proposed to highlight differentials beyond access, including skills, usage, emotional costs, and benefits related to levels of engagement with technology (Huang et al., 2015; Ragnedda, 2017; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015). Ragnedda (2017) underscores three interconnected levels of the digital divide, namely access, use, and benefits related

to technological engagement. The author shares that access to “the internet may support users in increasing social capital while gaining benefits in economic, personal, and cultural terms.” Therefore, access to the internet is only the first level of the digital divide and having a particular set of skills and motivations to use the technological infrastructure is also essential to harness the multifaceted benefits available (Ragnedda, 2017; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015). Research has described multiple barriers to entering and gaining experience in the digital landscape for people who are digitally excluded (Eynon, 2015). Limitations to access, support networks, and digital skills have been found to deprive young people of motivation to engage in technologies or perceive them as valuable (Eynon, 2015). Additionally, the digital divide that has contributed to the difference in comfort and confidence may be understood from the framework of digital capital, which is a “subform of cultural capital linked to the use of digital technologies and contemporary cyber culture” (Gomez, 2021, p. 2537). Notably, recent research found a widening of the digital divide within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Hirschi et al., 2022).

Although digitization and technological advancement has been discussed in relation to increased division amongst demographics with and without access, some scholars believe that the future of work and digitization is far from bleak. While the

transformation of the world of work is expected to bring about some uncertainty and confusion, it also heralds the beginning of a completely new set of jobs, skills, and vocational paths that could minimize some of the risks associated with unsafe jobs and doing away with routine and monotonous tasks that are often experienced as dull and unpleasant (Lent, 2018). Additionally, the flexibility of designing your career trajectory and having the freedom to choose tasks and assignments consistent with one’s interest and goals at a pace that best suits people’s stage of life has been identified as an advantage. What remains unknown is how the benefits and challenges associated with a digital economy can be applied to individual decision-makers to help them plan for successful career development.

Transforming the Conceptualization of Career

The digital economy contributes towards challenging the very conceptualization of career, as has been understood in the past. Career has traditionally been conceptualized as paid employment, and some of the earlier career theories focused on linking developmental stages of individuals to the different stages of career development (e.g. Super, 1980). The earlier career theories assumed changes to be mostly related to people’s age and developmental stage and did not attend to changes evident in the world of work, nor newer

challenges posed by economic and social changes. The work-life climate of the 21st Century points towards redefining the notion of career development. Career is now understood as comprising meaningful life activities over time, which may include paid employment and may also include an individual’s sense of passion or interest in an activity (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006). With the broadened view of career, most theories recognize that through the process of career development people continuously integrate their contexts and construct their lives, including their work lives (Cranford et al., 2003; Savickas et al., 2009; Tims & Bakker, 2010). The expanded view of career and the associated assumptions now guide career practitioners to identify and use principles and processes that develop, promote, and enhance effective decision-making in meaningful life activities over time (Riverin-Simard & Simard, 2011). However, the challenges that the digital economy presents are unparalleled and have brought about more rapid changes than what career literature, assessment methods, and job-related information has equipped us with. Hence, there is a need to continue exploring the lived experiences of people who are successfully managing their career decision-making to inform theory development.

For young people making decisions about work and employment, career development is best discussed within the

framework of youth transitions (Blustein et al., 1997). It involves a transition that intersects school-life, adult life, and work-life. Hence, a successful transition experience is expected to impact career development. There are both opportunities and risks associated with youth transitions (Arnett, 2000; Beaujot & Kerr, 2007). These transitions may or may not be supported by existing larger socio-economic structures and/or cultural frameworks. These contextual influences on transition impact identity development of youth (Schwartz et al., 2012). Hence, it is important to explore and fully understand how the contextual changes brought about by the booming digital economy are affecting both the identity and career development of young people who are journeying through multiple transition experiences. This relationship has not been adequately addressed in the literature, partly because this area of focus is an emerging area. The possibility of supporting career development of young people in the 21st century rests on increased scholarship and active research on the relationship between vocational choices and contextual influences, especially related to digitalization. This study aims to address this gap in literature and advance theory development and further opportunities for practice recommendations for young people making career decisions in a digital economy.

Theoretical Framework

The traditional theories of career development mainly focused on the internal characteristics of the individual such as interests, abilities, values, personality, and aptitude (Inkson & Elkin, 2008). Some of the classic theories of career, such as Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environment, Super's self-concept theory of career development, Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise, and the social cognitive career theory, while acknowledging the role of environmental influence do not fully recognize contextual aspects of career development (Inkson & Elkin, 2008). Much of the focus in these theories have been on personal characteristics of the decision-maker and the characteristics of the workplace to find a possible 'fit' between the individual and the 'right' vocation. This can be somewhat limiting in the face of the present-day challenges of global careers and a digital economy. More recently, constructivist theories that highlight the importance of contextual factors have gained popularity (Guichard, 2005; Leong & Gupta, 2008; Patton, 2008). Some of these theories have a wider reach and account for the complexity of a globalized world. They also acknowledge the influence of environmental social systems on career decision-making and have incorporated dimensions of culture into the theories. Current theories, in keeping

with the modern changes, have integrated aspects of globalization, contextual and cultural influences, social justice, and economic advances and uncertainties (Anderson et al., 2012; Arthur & Collins, 2010; Krumboltz, 2009; McMahon, 2005; Pope, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2011). Yet, even when a broader perspective is adopted, such as seen in social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 2002), the onus on the individual for making progress is more burdensome than what is often anticipated by young people. This has been highlighted through findings of the importance and significance of self-efficacy in career decision making (Betz & Hackett, 2006). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their capacity to execute a task or achieve a goal. Although attention to contextual factors was lacking in earlier theoretical models, the significance of self-efficacy demonstrated in previous research remains important to consider.

When attempting to understand the career development process of young people in this era of digitalization, one of the more recent theories that addresses facets of their unique transitional experience not fully captured by other theories is Schlossberg's (2011) model of life transitions. This theory focuses on the systemic factors that are common to all transitions, and the author suggests coping strategies to manage career development that intersect with transition. The theory pays attention to the '4 S's of transition' - situation, self,

support, and strategies – that could both explain and be applied to the transition being experienced by young people within themselves as well as in the world of work. This model is more dynamic than the traditional “fit” models discussed above.

Emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought unprecedented and unexpected changes and transitions, the precarity lens (Blustein, 2022) draws attention to how individuals adapt and cope with uncertainty, loss, disruption, and anxiety. Along with the model of life transitions (Schlossberg, 2011), the precarity model addresses the additional layers of global uncertainty that were current throughout this study. The author of the model maintains that in times of uncertainty and loss, individuals engage in resilience and resistance to overcome structures and societal barriers that hinder their career goals. In the context of the digital economy, young people are vulnerable to the ongoing and unstoppable structural and economic forces that influence and determine their vocational future. Previous generations have yet to experience these changes, and thus, young people are left with little guidance and support in navigating this transition.

The objectives of the present study are consistent with this framework in terms of helpful and hindering factors experienced by young people when making career decisions and how it is perceived by career practitioners keeping to the context of the

digital economy. However, the study hopes to build on this theory to expand the relationship between career decision-making and the transforming economy impelled by digitalization and automation.

Purpose of the Study

Although extant literature has described how the transition to the digital economy challenges career development (Hirschi, 2018; Medici, 2023a), there is a dearth of knowledge related to how these challenges are being overcome. An increased understanding of navigating successful career/employment transitions in the digital economy from the perspective of young workers and employees is critical in facilitating career development approaches that reflect the context in which these decisions are being made. This qualitative study sought to better understand the career decision-making process of young Canadians between the ages of 25 and 35 within a labour market increasingly influenced by digital technologies.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study were to identify important factors in the decision-making process of young people that have contributed to doing well in navigating the multiple options, opportunities, and challenges posed by the digital economy. The following objectives guided the study:

1. Understand how young

people are making career decisions in a digital economy.

2. Determine what has helped and hindered young people in doing well with making career decisions in a digital market.
3. Investigate factors young people would have found helpful to make career decisions had the factors been available.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore what helped and hindered the career decision making process of young Canadians in a digital economy. Interviews were conducted using Zoom video platform software. The ECIT interview guided the process of exploring specific factors that were helpful, hindering, and wished for within participants’ lived experiences of career decision-making. Prior to the ECIT portion of the interview, participants were asked for their personal responses to various contextual questions. These included: What does career mean to you? What does doing well in career decision-making mean to you? How has digitization played a role in your process of career decision-making? Through these questions, researchers sought to gain a deeper insight into the subjective perspectives and contexts of the participant sample. After the ECIT portion of the interview, participants were asked: What advice do you have

for young people making career decisions in the digital economy? And what in your opinion should educators, counsellors, policy makers, or the government do differently to increase the success of young people making career decisions in the digital economy? These questions highlighted the recommendations and priorities of those who took part in the study. Lastly, demographic data was collected to facilitate the description of the sample.

Participants

This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Board of Trinity Western University. Recruitment was done through recruitment posters on social media and around the university campus. Participants were also recruited through word of mouth and snowball sampling. In alignment with inclusion criteria, the 14 participants were young adults living in Canada who were between the ages of 25 and 35 (mean = 27.90; median = 28). Each participant self-identified as doing well, based on their own definition, in career decision-making considering the influence of digitization in the labour market. Participants were given an opportunity to elaborate of their definition of doing well in career decision making in the interview. Of the 13 participants, nine identified as female and four as male. In the sample, five participants identified as immigrants to Canada. The participants represented a diverse

group of students and workers with a range of educational levels from trade school education to master's level degrees. See Table 1 for participant demographic information.

Enhanced Critical Incident Technique

The Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) is a qualitative methodology, adapted from the Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954). Research questions exploring what helps and hinders a particular activity or experience can be well answered through the CIT method (Butterfield et al., 2009). The evolution of the ECIT method arose through various adaptations to the original CIT method, including the use of contextual questions that primed participants for the interview content and supported the gathering of contextual information related to the activity being explored. The addition of inquiring about factors participants would have found helpful if they had been available, also known as wish list items, was also part of the enhanced procedure. The adaptations that led to the enhanced method have made it applicable to studying phenomena in the field of counselling (Butterfield et al., 2005).

In this study the stated objectives entail obtaining a detailed description of what the participants have observed as helpful, hindering, or would have helped with a defined aim

(here, career decision-making). This objective is best suited for the ECIT methodology (see Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009). The selection of the ECIT methodology was further informed on the methodology's suitability for preliminary explorations of phenomena for which extant literature is limited and for which no theory of framework exists. The methodology generates thorough, detailed descriptions of data based on participants' reporting on what they have observed in themselves, others, or in their environment (Woolsey, 1986). By following procedural guidelines outlined in the ECIT protocol researchers can explore the lived experience of participants while limiting the subjective bias of the researcher. Considering the dearth of extant literature aimed at exploring the pertinent topic of young Canadians career-decision making within an ever increasingly digital economy, the ECIT methodology was used to guide this exploration. This approach has been successfully utilized in studies involving similar research questions and populations (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Britten & Borgen, 2010; Mathew, 2019).

In this study, participants were asked to provide detailed descriptions of factors that have supported and impeded their process of navigating career decisions in a digital economy. Following the ECIT protocol, participants were asked to name the factors, provide a rationale or description of how each factor

Table 1

Summary of Basic Demographic Data

Participant No.	Age	Sex	Education	Country of Origin	Professional Activity
1	24	M	Master of arts in leadership in healthcare	India	Consulting and freelancing
2	25	M	Bachelor in pharmaceutical sciences and post graduate diploma in international business	India	Healthcare and software technology
3	26	F	Bachelor in communication	Canada	Communications consultant and social media manager
4	27	F	Bachelor in commerce with a concentration in supply chain management	Canada	Equipment finance account manager
5	28	F	Bachelor of science in psychology	Canada	UX (user experience) researcher
6	29	F	Master in arts in counselling psychology	Canada	Mental health counsellor and business owner
7	32	F	Bachelor degree	South Africa	Content marketing manager
8	29	M	Master of arts in counselling psychology	India	Mental health counsellor
9	28	F	Bachelor of education	India	Secondary school teacher
10	26	F	Master of leadership in healthcare	India	Medical office assistant
11	32	F	Bachelor in political science	Canada	Clinical health associate
12	28	M	Culinary arts	Canada	Business owner in advertising and web services
13	32	F	Master of arts in counselling psychology	South Africa	Mental health counsellor
14	25	M	Computer science degree	Canada	Software developer

influenced them, and provide at least one specific example in which they were helped or hindered by the factor mentioned. Interviews were analyzed and the factors or *critical incidents* were identified and extracted, from which categories were constructed based on the similarity of incidents. Wish list items, which described factors participants believed would have been helpful had they been available, were also extracted and categorized.

Data Collection

Data was collected through 90-minute semi-structured interviews conducted virtually using Zoom software by a team of trained interviewers. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was stored using Atlas.ti, an encrypted password-only computer-based software program.

Participants from across Canada took part in the study, with the majority of participants residing in British Columbia. Prior to the interview, participants were sent a copy of the informed consent information and asked to consider their experiences of career-decision making as they relate to an increasingly digitized economy. The informed consent information was reviewed at the start of the interview. Participants were then asked various open-ended questions to gain a contextualized understanding of what doing well in career meant for each participant and how they perceived the influence of

digitization in career decision-making. Next the ECIT interview protocol outlined by Butterfield et al. (2009) was conducted to determine helpful, hindering, and wish list factors. After the ECIT interview protocol, participants were asked what they recommend be done by policy makers to support young Canadians in the realm of career decision making considering the increasingly digital economy. Lastly, demographic data was collected.

In line with ECIT, interviews were conducted until exhaustiveness, also known as saturation, was reached. The interview process was standardized to maintain consistency across interviews. All participants were invited to take part in a follow-up credibility check via email to confirm or make changes to the critical incidents and categorization of their data. No changes were made at this credibility check, and no participants withdrew from the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through the steps described by Butterfield et al. (2009):

1. Determining the frame of reference;
2. Organizing and coding the raw data by identifying critical incidents (factors) and wish list items, then formulating the categories derived from grouping similar incidents; and

3. Determining the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the results (p. 271).

Transcription, coding, and categorization were done within the setting of a research team, involving the lead investigator and multiple research assistants.

In addition, the nine credibility checks specified by Butterfield et al. (2009) were employed to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings:

1. Audio recording the interviews;
2. Interview fidelity;
3. Independent extraction of critical incidents;
4. Calculating exhaustiveness;
5. Calculating participation rates;
6. Placement of incidents into categories by an independent judge;
7. Cross-checking by participants;
8. Expert opinions; and
9. Theoretical agreement.

For a more detailed explanation of the credibility checks see Butterfield et al., 2009.

The expert opinion credibility check, in which experts in the field were asked to comment on the categories that emerged through participant accounts, garnered curiosity from one expert about the role of self-efficacy in young people's experience navigating career decisions in a digital economy. The other expert who was consulted inquired about

the ways the digital divide was evidenced within the data. These considerations are addressed in the discussion section.

Results

This section begins with the analysis of the contextual and recommendation questions participants were asked within the interview, followed by a reporting of the ECIT results.

Meaning of Career and Doing Well

Participants' personal accounts of what career means included the following three themes:

1. Career as dynamic, unique, and process based,
2. Career as meeting needs and having needs met,
3. Career as a means of direction and growth.

Career was expressed as an ever-evolving process in which each role, experience, and decision was viewed as adding building blocks in the evolution of an individual's career path and experience. Career was described as a dynamic and long-term process to have needs met and meet the needs of society and others. Expressions of career as "where I can contribute" and "the impact I can have" illuminated understandings of ways career engages with and contributes to something beyond the individual.

Participants also spoke of career being personally defined as a way of having financial, identity, and developmental needs met. The theme of career as a means of direction and growth was highlighted in descriptions of career as life activities that direct time and energy toward the aim and outcome of gleaning meaning and purpose.

As participants discussed subjective meanings of doing well with career-decision making, the following themes emerged:

1. Doing well as a personal process,
2. Doing well as alignment in strengths, skills, values, and desires and career roles/opportunities,
3. Doing well as growth, learning, and sustainability.

Doing well in career-decision making was described as a unique, personal process. It was clear that when it comes to doing well in career decision making, one size does not fit all. Participants shared that being able to engage with personal values, skills, education, and strengths in the career realm is an essential part of what it means to do well. A reciprocal process that involves providing and receiving value in one's career was highlighted as a key component of what it means to do well. Growth, learning, and continued development were also named as markers of doing well in career decision making and engagement.

Role of Digitization in Career Decision Making

The role of digitization in career decision making, as described by participants, included two themes:

1. Increased access to career information, resources, and opportunities,
2. Change and uncertainty.

By and large, the influence of digitization of the process of career decision-making was discussed in terms of positive changes and impacts. For example, participants described the impact of digitization in relation to increased flexibility, job opportunity, and networking opportunity. Despite the recognition of the positive changes brought about by digitization, such as increased access to information and options, participants also highlighted challenging aspects of the rapid shifts, including anxiety accompanying the boundless information and options available through the internet. Further, digitization brought some participants to question the future relevance of specific career fields and roles considering projected digital advancements as they navigated their career decision-making path.

Participant's Recommendations for Young People and Policy Makers

When asked about what advice participants would offer to other young people navigating career decisions in a digital context, participants expressed advice to harness: (a) Interpersonal connections, (b) Intrapersonal confidence, (c) Contextual resources and options. Networking and asking others for help was advised to support young people in navigating the unfamiliar terrain of the evolving digital world. In addition, participants' advice highlighted the importance of taking risks and "putting yourself out there" to gain experience and explore options. The last theme of advice pertained to embracing technology and learning opportunities throughout the career process.

Additionally, participant responses offered recommendations for educators, counsellors, policy makers, and the government to increase the success of young people making career decisions in a digital economy. The recommendations were grouped into three themes:

1. Educate and prepare young people for digitization,
2. Provide support in adapting to ongoing changes,
3. Reduce inequity for marginalized populations and those facing added barriers.

The first theme highlights the desire for the intersection of career and digitization to be integrated into education. The young people in this study encouraged educators, counsellors, policy makers, and the government to consider incorporating more discussion and learning around digitization and the intersection of digitization and the world of work in educational settings. This recommendation was made with the hope that young people in Canada would be better informed and prepared for the continued impact of digitization on specific job fields and work environments. The second theme related to increasing support as young people adapt to ongoing changes and shifts caused by digital advancements. Support in learning how to utilize new technology and support in the transition from educational settings to workplace settings were specifically noted. The final theme of recommendations related to addressing the digital divide and focusing resources on supporting those who face added barriers to adapting and harnessing the benefits of an increasingly digital labour market. Ensuring marginalized populations were granted access to technology and support in learning how to use technology was a foundational recommendation. Additionally, from participants with lived experiences of immigration to Canada, recommendations for policy makers to consider immigrant credentials and support immigrants in meeting Canadian

digital literacy standards was proposed.

ECIT Results

In responding to questions about what helped and hindered the participants' career decision making in a digital economy, participants offered specific factors or incidents with concrete examples. There were 147 critical incidents reported (58 helping; 48 hindering; and 41 wish list items) by the 14 participants in this study. From these incidents, seven categories emerged that were based on the incidents similarly to offer a thematic representation of the data. Findings are presented in Table 2. The table displays the number of participants who described an incident within each category (as helpful, hindering, or wished for), the percentage of participants who mentioned at least one incident within the category, and the total number of incidents contained in the category. The categories that emerged from the sorting of incidents mentioned include: (a) access, awareness, and education, (b) interpersonal factors, (c) social media and career-related platforms, (d) digital technology, (e) workplace and environmental factors, (f) flexibility, wellbeing, and resources, and (g) intrapersonal factors.

Helping

Within the seven categories that emerged from the data, four of the categories had a higher

Table 2

Categorization of Results

Categories	Helping			Hindering			Wish List		
	P#	P%	I#	P#	P%	I#	P#	P%	I#
Access, Awareness, and Education	11	78.57	11	8	57.14	11	10	71.43	15
Interpersonal Factors	9	64.29	15	5	35.71	8	6	42.86	11
Social Media and Career Related Platforms	8	57.14	13	3	21.43	3	0	0	0
Digital Technology	5	35.71	8	3	21.43	6	6	42.86	7
Workplace and Environmental Factors	4	28.57	4	7	50.00	11	4	28.57	4
Flexibility, Wellbeing, and Resources	3	21.43	5	4	28.57	4	1	7.14	2
Intrapersonal Factors	2	14.29	2	6	42.86	6	2	14.29	2

Note. P# = Number of Participants; P% Percentage of Participants; I# = Number of Incidents

representation of helping incidents than hindering incidents. These categories include: (a) access, awareness, and education, (b) interpersonal factors, (c) social media platforms, (d) digital technology.

Access, Awareness, and Education

In this category, 11 participants (79%) spoke about ways access, awareness, and education related to digital changes and technology were helpful in their process of navigating career decisions considering digitization. This category housed factors that related to having access to

information, awareness, and knowledge of online tools, technology, and career-related information. This included levels of familiarity with technological advancements and changes in the labour market influenced by digitization. One of the participants highlighted the interconnection between access and information as she said, “you can really become, anybody can really become an expert in any field that they choose quite inexpensively. There’s a lot of free information on the Internet, and you can really deep dive into what you’re interested in” (22). Another participant shared, “having access from a young age to digital technology enabled me to become

comfortable with exploring information online” (97).

In this category, eight participants (57%) shared incidents that impeded their process of career decision-making in a digital economy. One participant spoke of the challenging aspects of having copious amounts of information at her fingertips by saying, “there is so much information online that it can be, one, overwhelming to the psyche, and two, hard to find what you need. It’s like looking for a needle in a haystack, right?” (97). Beyond the overwhelm due to information overload, another participant discussed the challenge of navigating what information can be trusted in the digital world.

He said:

I am not sure if it's fair to say, but the number of scams and fraudsters that are available online... at the beginning of my career here in Canada, I did go through a job scam where they were offering a lucrative offer (79).

Interpersonal Factors

In the category of interpersonal factors, nine participants (64%) shared that incidents belonging to the interpersonal factors category were helpful. Critical incidents included in this category pertained to relationships and connections with others, such as relations with family, friends, colleagues, mentors, employers, and others in the community. Interpersonal activities such as networking, collaborating, relating with supportive others, and receiving advice and mentorship were things participants spoke of as they described the interpersonal aspects of navigating career decisions in an increasingly digital economy. One participant shared that "talking to other people that have transitioned from that in-person academia to more tech" was helpful in that it supported her in: being able to learn how my skills apply and how to present myself on a resume in order to be able to show my experience. I don't have as much experience in the tech world, but here's how I could apply it (30). Another participant highlighted

the connectivity opportunities made possible through digital modalities saying, "I think in a way digitization has allowed you to find, it opens up the whole world, so you can find people" (22).

In contrast to the ways interpersonal factors were described as helpful to young adults, five participants (35%) shared incidents related to interpersonal factors that impeded their career decision-making process. For some, this represented a lack or scarcity of opportunities to connect and network with others. For others, the lack of face-to-face contact during the COVID-19 pandemic was described as a challenge. One participant highlighted this challenge, saying:

I do think that with the pandemic and just how it was so online, and we were so isolated from in-person that made it really hard to make the decision to do an online practice and invite more online work to my day (92).

Another participant spoke about their experience of increased pressure and interpersonal competition between those familiar with digital tools and those who are slower to learn. He said:

Competition is too much out here. People obviously want to hire those who are very friendly and quick [with technology]. Those who know how to do

different tricks in digitalization rather than somebody who is slow, steady, or is learning (25).

Social Media Platforms

This category was endorsed by eight participants (57%) and encompassed incidents related to the use of social media platforms and career related platforms, which were utilized for a wide range of purposes such as job searching, networking, promotion, content creation, and leisure engagement. This category was closely related to the interpersonal factors category in that participant's use of social media was closely related to their interpersonal connections with others and networking activities. Platforms that were most commonly mentioned included LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. This category also included platforms used for accessing and obtaining information such as Coursera and YouTube. Some participants described specific career field platforms, for example SEED, a platform for education professionals. One participant shared:

I think social media is not only a creative outlet, but it can kind of inspire the creative in me... I feel like I see it in two different ways, where it connects me with people, but I also gain knowledge and I get inspired for my job in social media (99).

Another participant shared:

LinkedIn has always been helpful as just like a baseline for you know applying for jobs and networking, everything it's meant to do, but I think in terms of making decisions about what type of company I want to work for, how my values align with certain things, what I am looking at in terms of the size of a company, and what I am looking at in terms of the size of the specific team, LinkedIn has been a source of knowledge for that (30).

Although social media and career related platforms were described in ways that were primarily helpful, three participants (21%) offered perspectives that illuminated how a lack of authenticity and honesty online was a hindering aspect of social media engagement and connectivity. One participant spoke of this challenge saying:

At the end of the day when a person is looking at it [online profile], they don't really know you in person and there's not an immediate sense of trust that's building right there. You know it's almost romanticized on your profile that you've done everything so perfectly (79).

Digital Technology

Five participants (36%) endorsed a critical incident in the digital technology category as being helpful to their process

of making career decisions in an increasingly digitized labour market. This category housed factors pertaining to the utility and availability of technology, including the use of digital tools, applications, and equipment. As one participant stated:

“Not just physical technology, but also software. You know, we can use zoom for an informational interview with someone who's already in my field of work and see how they're finding school and what they think about the career so far and things like that, right? So, having access to that technology and that technology existing in the first place is definitely helpful (97).

Emphasizing how a specific technological app has been helpful, another participant said:

I still use them [digital task management tools] on a day to day basis to understand what is my most urgent task for today and my urgent tasks also have the ones that have procrastinated for a very long period of time (79).

However, three participants (21%) noted that factors within the digital technology category hindered their journey of making career decisions considering digitization. Keeping up with technological changes, the sheer number of applications and tools available, and challenges in accessing necessary technology

were expressed as hindrances. One participant expressed:

I think that one thing that is a hindrance for many people, not just myself, is how quickly technology changes. I know for people who do not have such advanced computer literacy or digital literacy, it can be very difficult to learn new tools and things like that (97).

Hindering

In two categories hindering factors represented the largest proportion of participants. These categories include workplace and environmental factors and intrapersonal factors. An equal number of participants endorsed factors as helpful and hindering in the category flexibility, wellbeing, and resources.

Workplace and Environmental

Within this category, seven participants (50%) endorsed factors as impeding their career decision making process considering digitization. This category pertains to the interaction of specific contexts, workplaces, environments, and career fields with the digital economy. Both personal contexts, such as immigration, language, experience, and culture, and labour market and career field contexts were discussed by participants. The COVID-19 pandemic was an overarching contextual factor highlighted across various

participant interviews due to the timing of this study. Various work and educational settings were met with diverse challenges and navigated the use and dependence on technology and digital means in distinct ways. Considering personal contexts, one participant experienced some challenges as an immigrant to Canada seeking to enter the labour market. He said, “they don’t consider your Indian experience or your experience from back where you come from, so this makes it really difficult, we have to start from level zero” (55). Another participant illuminated a hindering aspect of her immigration experience sharing, “There has been a lot of cultural difference, it was I would say, a culture shock for me. You know, I was completely lost at some point” (34). Concerning factors that are influencing specific fields, multiple participants spoke about increased competition in the labour market due to web-based expansion, greater hiring options, and education inflation. One participant expressed:

There tons of competition in software and web development and essentially, anything that’s online right now it’s very difficult to come up with something new and even when you do come up with something new, it’s difficult to get market share because now you’re competing with who has already been there (23).

Despite the hindering factors described, four participants

(29%) shared factors related to their contexts that facilitated their doing well with career decisions. One participant shared:

My workplace has been a kind of place that has invested in my growth and taught me patiently... if they would not have invested the time and energy in me and taught me everything, my supervisor would actually sit with me on the chair next to me and taught me this is how you do it, step by step, I think, for one week, she used to sit with me continuously in teaching and keep a regular check on me and how am I doing. So, if you invest in people, I think you are making them technology friendly in this digital era (25).

Flexibility, Wellbeing, and Resources

Four participants (29%) mentioned incidents within this category as hindering and three participants (21%) mentioned incidents within this category as being helpful. This category houses factors associated with participant’s accounts of work-life balance, time and efficiency, and resources that influenced participants’ experiences of flexibility and freedom. In speaking about the way one participant has been hindered in her career decision making and career satisfaction, she said, “the lack of structure that can happen in a digitized world, like the lack of boundaries on my time

has sometimes been difficult to navigate” (92). Two participants drew attention to the adverse impact of increased digital use during COVID-19 on their mental health.

However, the participants who endorsed an incident in this category as helpful highlighted the value of remote work in offering more freedom, time, and balance. One participant who worked remotely shared, “it’s also helped me with that work life balance because I have been able to work from home essentially from anywhere with an internet connection. I have been able to do things that I wouldn’t have been able to do” (22).

Intrapersonal Factors

Critical incidents within this category were endorsed by six participants (43%) as hindering in their process of navigating career decisions in a market characterized by increasing digital advancement. This category encompasses critical incidents that are unique and personal to participants, including traits, characteristics, internal strengths, and growth edges. Examples participants provided included individual levels of openness to change, openness to technology, resourcefulness, mental wellness, and courage to ask for help and step out of one’s comfort zone. In describing the way an intrapersonal factor was hindering, one participant shared, “technology still scares me so much, now I have learned to handle it, but I sometimes do mess

it up” (25).

However, two participants (14%) mentioned that intrapersonal factors were helpful to their career decision-making process considering digitization. One participant shared, “when it comes to my personality, and my life experience, I have been forced to work within constraints a lot and that has really allowed me to hone a skill of being very resourceful” (97). This participant described this intrapersonal skill as a resource that supported her ability to navigate the complex landscape of a digital economy.

Wish List

The wish list factors constitute critical incidents that participants believed would have been helpful in the past or wish for in the future to support their career decision making process considering digitization. Three categories were endorsed by 25% or more participants as wish list items. These categories include: (a) access, awareness, and education, (b) interpersonal factors, (c) digital technology. Ten participants (71%) wished to have been or to become more aware, knowledgeable, and educated about the way digitization is transforming the labour market landscape. Wishes in the category of access, awareness, and education were expressed as desires for additional digitally focused training, more opportunities for continued education, further knowledge of projected career changes, and

increased career guidance. As described by one participant about her career in education:

... and the third thing, of course, I would say is being knowledgeable about how my career changes with times you know. We’ve been in a face-to-face classroom for like hundreds of years, there was no change and then suddenly pandemic strike, there was the strike and then everything turned online. And then, teachers no more taught in a face-to-face classroom. Everything became technology oriented... I don’t know what is to be expected in in the future, especially in the field of education. Because right now I would say we don’t even need teachers, because technology can teach you everything. So, that’s the way things are progressing, and I think, unless I have a very good understanding of what’s happening in my career, I won’t be able to make smart decisions (34).

In the category of interpersonal factors, participants expressed desires for increased interpersonal connections in the form of networking, mentorship, and general social support. In relation to a wish for mentorship in the past, one participant shared:

[a mentor] would have been really helpful and also just to have someone help me like roadmap what it [my career]

could look like in the future would be really helpful because I am kind of figuring it out on my own. Just through like all these different pieces of information, but yeah, it’s nice to have someone to look up to (92).

The wish list items identified by participants highlight the desire of young Canadians to engage in discussion and learning to become more informed and prepared to navigate the increasingly complex landscape of career activities.

Discussion

The current study’s findings provide insights into how the rapid changes brought about by digitization impact the career decision-making process of young people in Canada. Digitization has evoked mixed reactions in the labour market, with some sectors being more open to digitization than others and many in the workforce sharing their anxiety related to the uncertainty of future careers. The impact of digitization during this study was exacerbated due to shifts and uncertainties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving the world to face unexpected and sudden shifts in the labour market and career engagement. Many industries and fields were forced to adjust, often at the mercy of digital means. The intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and digitization is implicated in the results of this study.

The guiding frameworks situate participant accounts within existing models. The model of life transitions (Schlossberg, 2011) addresses facets of transitional experiences, including the '4 S's of transition' - situation, self, support, and strategies. The participants' accounts in this study on helpful and hindering factors demonstrate a unique and individual mix of factors that fall into the facets outlined in the model of life transitions theory. Participants addressed situational factors, intrapersonal or self factors, supports they possessed or lacked, and strategies they found helpful or hindering in the process of career decision-making. Homing in on the pertinent situational context during this study, Blustein's (2020) recent discussion of precarity addresses how individuals adapt and cope with the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. This perspective highlights resilience and resistance processes, which were expressed in participants' successful career decision-making processes, which was the focus of this study.

The results confirm some of the previously known aspects of change towards a digital economy, and there are novel findings that have implications for career development literature and practice. Three broad areas emerged from the seven categories, housing the 147 factors shared by participants in their accounts of successful career decisions in a digital economy. These areas implicated in the

career decision-making process for young Canadians include (1) Access, (2) Contribution of digital technologies themselves, and (3) Personal/social factors.

With regards to the first broad area of access, it is evident that the lack of equitable access and differences in opportunities for gaining knowledge and resources depending on multiple factors directly impact young people's career decision-making process. When examining the results, unique factors and experiences were identified in participants who had recently moved or immigrated to Canada. The unique factors identified highlight the lived experience of differential access and knowledge of digital resources. Participants who recently moved described the barriers they faced in their educational and career endeavours due to less familiarity with technology than their Canadian counterparts. Descriptions of "starting from zero" in regards to generally navigating career decisions in Canada as well as developing technological skills were heard by multiple participants, highlighting lived experiences of the digital divide (Huang et al., 2015; Ragnedda, 2017; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015). The digital divide points to inequalities of access beyond physical connectivity to the internet, including motivational, skills-based, and usage differentials (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2015). The importance of equitable access and opportunities to gain digital knowledge and

resources is additionally supported by the fact that about three-quarters of participants in the study included this as a wishlist item.

While there is a greater appreciation for digital transformation in many sectors, there are also apprehensions about gaps in educational preparedness to meet the needs of the rapid changes in the workplace. Many job openings ask for qualifications and experiences that are unlikely to have been met by following the traditional university education spanning 4-6 years. Traditional training has not been designed for the recent changes, which can impact young people's confidence levels, leading to questioning their decision-making process and their efficacy for actively engaging in the job market. This divergence between mainstream education formats and the current labour market warrants challenging the methods, timeframe, and preparation needed for positions in the present day world of work. A related issue is that of the nature of training itself. Many organizations are becoming open to informal training and learning that is less reliant on traditional credentialing methods. Participants in the current study alluded to learning skills over open-access platforms and the possibility of learning with lower or no financial costs. While this is beneficial for some young people, especially those who are self-motivated and have the capacity and prior experience to master skills in a self-paced and self-driven manner, it has

been found to be a barrier when it comes to people who need supportive learning environments and rely on collective and incentive-based learning models. The shifts in learning modes and methods have been less emphasized in the literature and are consistent with the notion of the digital divide (Ragnedda, 2017).

The second central area the current study highlighted is how technological advancement contributes to young people's career decision-making. This area was particularly pertinent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as the pandemic exponentially spurred reliance on technology across various industries, catalyzing these changes and producing a precarious career context. Participants in this study highlighted the uncertainty in their career decisions due to multiple changes in job factors, such as shifts in job demands, work location, reliance on technology, and work-life balance impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The model of life transitions (Schlossberg, 2011) emphasizes the significance of situational factors and strategies in navigating transitions. Situational and strategy facets are implicated in how digitization is constantly shaping and influencing the context of the labour market and that technology itself is increasingly employed as a strategy to guide and execute career decisions. In other words, existing technology is playing a

role in preparing young people for the digital economy of the future, as was heard in participants' accounts of using social media and career-related platforms to search, apply, network, and train for career-related activities. With unprecedented shifts in almost all sectors to adopt digital technologies, they can also be used to improve ways of accessing and learning job-related skills and trends in the labour market, networking, and making connections that would not have been possible without technology. Despite some real advantages offered by online platforms, social media, and digital learning tools, relying on them also has adverse consequences. The participants in the study have highlighted how challenges with the reliability and authenticity of digital platforms make it difficult for career decision-making, even for those who are well-versed in technology and digital mediums. Decisional dilemmas presented by the sheer number of sources can be challenging given the uncertain, changing nature of the world of work.

Moreover, since job creation and destruction are also linked to digitalization (Balsmeier & Woerter, 2019), people have varying levels of trust in the advancement of digital technologies, leading young people to use them cautiously. The influence and impact of trust levels and engagement have yet to be addressed in the literature. The assumption has been that younger people have a greater

facility with navigating the digital world (Rosales et al., 2023). Hence, minimal resources have been allocated for understanding the nature of young people's relationships with technology, and far less how this influences their career decision-making and strategies for career development.

The third and final area highlighted by the findings relates to the personal and interpersonal factors influencing career decision-making in a digital economy. The literature on the digital divide has expanded to include motivational and emotional factors attached to using information technology and the willingness to engage with digital tools (Eynon & Geniets, 2016; Huang et al., 2015). Inequitable digital access that has contributed to the difference in comfort and confidence may be understood from the framework of digital capital, which is a "subform of cultural capital linked to the use of digital technologies and contemporary cyberculture" (Gomez, 2021, p. 2537). The varying levels of confidence and apprehensions related to engaging with technology in general and the digital world, in particular, have been found to influence young people's career decision-making. This area has only been addressed superficially, not only in literature but also concerning policy-level interventions. The importance of access, awareness, and education in the realm of digitization was highlighted in participants' accounts, as well as in their recommendations to other young people navigating career decisions

in a digital era, which included confidently embracing oneself, embracing digital changes, and utilizing personal resources and supports. The results additionally demonstrate the considerable role of self-efficacy in the participant sample, as has been found in extant research (Betz & Hackett, 2006). In line with the self and support facets of the model of life transitions (Schlossberg, 2011), participants described how their confidence in themselves and their support systems, or lack thereof, was helpful and hindering, respectively. This was highlighted further in the recommendations the young participants offered to other young people navigating career decisions in a digital economy, which advised other young people to believe in themselves and courageously take risks to network, ask for help, and utilize technology and other resources to pave one's career path.

Blustein's (2022) discussion of precarity draws attention to the ways individuals manage the "uncertainty, loss, disruption, and anxiety that differentially impact people across contexts" (p. 565). It is a relevant lens through which to frame some of the challenges and the resilience/resistance addressed by participants in this study as they shared their unique experiences of making career decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic and in a digital economy. Blustein (2022) found that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted critical consciousness and resistance to inequity and

disparity in resources, which was also found in the current study, as multiple participants described their personal wishes and policy recommendations for more equitable access and education geared to digitization and technology. Another example of critical consciousness and resistance raised among participants was expressed through participants who faced challenges in navigating career decisions and options due to having credentials from outside of Canada that were unrecognized in the Canadian labour market. These participants expressed resistance by proposing policy changes to streamline credentialing processes for those who transition to residing and working in Canada.

This study adds to the current understanding of what a career means for young Canadians and what doing well in career decision-making means for this group. As described by participants, doing well in career decision-making within a digital economy is a dynamic, unique process that supports the reciprocal process of meeting personal needs and contributing beyond the self through activities that promote growth, direction, and sustainability. In a Canadian climate of rapid digital changes, areas of access, the contribution of digital technologies themselves, and personal/social factors are essential factors to consider in supporting young people's successful career decision-making process

Implications for Career Counselling

This study provides information on the complexity of decision-making processes needed to navigate psychologically challenging career transitions. The research assists young adults and their families through providing examples of how others have made career decisions in the face of changes in the economic realities brought about by digitization. It importantly informs career development theory, counselling practice, and research and policy responses to a digital economy.

Career Development Theory

Early career development theories were built on the assumption that careers are fixed and have been evolving to understand career as changing over a person's lifetime. This study expands our understanding of the way career activities are also influenced by changes in the digital world. Along with the rapidly changing landscape of career development, changes to careers themselves will be more rapid and less predictable. Findings contribute to an understanding of the increasing overlap between developmental, life, and contextual transitions which situate the career-decisions process.

There is increased complexity and pace of change regarding both precarity (Blustein, 2022) and the digital divide

(Ragnedda, 2017). Emerging models will need to address differences in technological resources, access, and knowledge. This study extends our current understanding of transitions in the unique context of an emerging digital economy. Moving forward, all career theories should consider the context and influence of digitization. Young people have already been immersed in technology, illustrating how career cannot be discussed without talking about technology.

Counselling Practice

Digitalization and automation are also impacting the practice of career counselling in multiple ways. The availability of big data and complex algorithms can provide career counsellors with newer tools and resources for facilitating more informed career planning. The use of computers and the internet to store and process digital footprints of people may be employed to arrive at reliable indicators that can predict occupational outcomes and current and future trends in the world of work. Also, artificial intelligence can aid career counselling with the use of chatbots that simulate human dialogue to facilitate some of the routine aspects of the counselling process, particularly related to assessment and navigation of informational resources (D'Silva et al., 2020). This would then provide career practitioners with increased capacity for the creative and interpersonal aspects of the

decision-making process and the necessary psychological support that is needed in this process.

Based on participant responses, factors within the category of access, awareness, and education were primarily identified as having been helpful and wished for, emphasizing the need for career professionals to address access, awareness, and education as a key area in supporting young people in their career decision making process. This can inform shaping curriculum and clinical training content. There is a need for career professionals to stay on top of changing career and labour market information, as well as how young people transition in a digital world. Rather than providing information, this study shows the need to streamline information such that young adults are provided access to accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information.

Additionally, digitization has challenged people's capacities for interpersonal relationships and networking, providing both opportunities and hindrances. Career professionals may need to assess young people's unique opportunities and abilities to connect with others and provide support to enhance this area. The study thus assists career practitioners in developing more inclusive tools and counselling interventions.

Research and Policy

Areas that require future research as identified

by this study include areas of access, contribution of digital technologies, and personal/social factors. The challenges associated with each of these areas are becoming pronounced with newer technological advancement. Hence, research and policy need to keep up with how access, technology, and personal/social factors intersect with career development. These needs are informed and supported by participants descriptions of helping, hindering, and wish list items housed by the categories outlined in Table 2. Addressing areas of access, technology, and personal/social factors would inform employers, organizations, and policy makers in terms of organizing and evaluating programs related to providing career services to fit best with the needs of young Canadians.

Limitations and Areas for Future Study

Some limitations include the exploratory nature of this study and the need for both broader and in-depth exploration of career decision making in the context of digitization. Participants seemed to be in the early stages of considering this intersection and found it challenging to respond with specificity based on their lived experiences. Namely, it was difficult to parse out general career decisions from those specific to the context of a digital economy. Participants demonstrated that the intersection of career and digitization had been considered

largely at a conceptual level, and therefore the number of critical incidents was lower than expected based on the chosen methodology. A potential to enhance our understanding could involve a follow up study exploring how participant's views and experiences have evolved, using the same participant sample.

Additionally, there are some considerations regarding the participant sample. The sample consisted of individuals born in Canada and immigrants primarily from India, leaving room to explore other demographics in future study. As well, some participants did not respond to the follow-up interview, thus limiting the richness of the data. People who have some familiarity or motivation to use technology would also be more likely to participate in this study.

Conclusion

This study provided an opportunity to listen to the experiences of young Canadians making career decisions in the context of a digital economy. Young Canadians who see themselves as doing well in career decision-making in a digital economy spoke about areas in which digitization and technological advancements were influencing and intersecting with their career activities in helpful and hindering ways. Young people highlighted the significance of access, awareness, and education in supporting their career decision-making process. There was an

overarching desire for greater access to education, technology, and resources. Young people in this study drew on interpersonal connections to network and take advantage of the expanding opportunities provided through digital advancements. Success in the realm of career decision making for young people in this study hinged on balancing the growing opportunities and information offered while not becoming overwhelmed by the copious amounts of information and pace of change. Rather, participants embraced the changes and uncertainty accompanying digitization utilizing their personal strengths and courage as well as the support of others. These characteristics of doing well in career decision making were not only expressed through incidents and examples of participants' lived experiences in this study, but were also offered by participants as recommendations to other young Canadian's navigating career decisions in a digital economy.

The findings of the study guide our attention to the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual dimensions associated with the navigation of career decisions in an increasingly digital economy. These findings inform areas of opportunity for career practitioners and policy makers in terms of access, digital technology, and personal/social factors when working with young Canadians.

While this exploratory study expands understanding of the way young Canadians are navigating careers in the digital

world, we hope that researchers, policy makers, and career development practitioners will find the categories and factors identified in this study helpful in prioritizing intervention consistent with and relevant to the current state of the world of work.

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