Context Counts in Career Development

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Abstract

This paper reviews existing literature to explore how changing labour market opportunities have altered the context in which career decisions are made. The literature investigating the effectiveness of traditional career counselling interventions is also briefly reviewed, and new helping approaches that emphasize the importance of intuition and embrace the unpredictability of the modern job climate are discussed. The authors' past research into employment transitions, wherein transitions are conceptualized as emotional rollercoasters, is used as a platform from which common challenges and contexts of job loss are then considered. Four broad contexts and their associated emotional trajectories are expanded upon, with high level suggestions for approaching work with clients within each of these contexts. The paper concludes with a suggested need to consider a fundamental shift in the aims of some career development interventions in order to take changing labour market opportunities more fully into account.

Approaches to vocational guidance and counselling have been heavily influenced by models developed in North America, during times when there was a stable or expanding labor market that resulted in work opportunities across a range of employment sectors (Bezanson, Hopkins & Neault, 2016; Li, 1996). Historical and current models from Super (1957) to Holland (1973) to Savickas (2012) have promoted self-exploration and understanding to find a good fit between a person's skills, attributes, passions, life circumstances, and labour market opportunities. Taken together these models tend to rest on a series of now outdated assumptions, including: there are a series of individual attributes or traits that draw people to certain occupations; these attributes or traits are pivotal to effective and desired decision-making; occupations that match the vocational interest of individuals are accessible to them; occupations are stable enough in their characteristics for assessment instruments that match the traits of individuals with occupational characteristics to be useful over time; and once secured, individuals have the capability to stay involved in desired occupations or career trajectories (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006).

Societal and employment contexts in North America and in other parts of the world have changed radically since these models were developed (Danziger & Ratner, 2010). An example from Canada is evident in an article from The Province newspaper on October 26, 2016, in which the federal Minister of Labour suggested that we need to "get used to job churn… [and that] high employment turnover and short-term contact work will continue in young people's lives… We also need to think about: How do we train and re-train people as they move from job to job…because it's going to happen" (Canadian ress, 2016). This perspective was recognized the following week in the federal government budget, with a number of measures put into place to address the ongoing volatility in the labour market. While this example is from Canada, related issues are arising in a number of countries around the world.

Career and vocational issues have a direct and visible impact on individuals and the broader society, and at a fairly basic level. These issues are affecting young people who are not able to effectively connect with the labour market and adults who need to manage employment/career transitions across the life span (Andres & Wyn, 2010; Danziger & Ratner, 2010). In several countries, governments are looking for guidance and counselling to provide assistance in ameliorating these issues. Furthermore, societal expectations are a major factor. In many countries, for example, there is a strong bias against technical and vocational education compared with university education because of the prestige and security that has traditionally accompanied professional occupations. This continues despite the better occupational opportunities and improved salaries for trades' people in those countries. Attempts at changing attitudes and practices related to vocational and career planning are often conducted without being informed by cultural orientations, which has led to problems with recruitment and retention of students into educational programs,

or their successful attachment with the labor force upon completion of their studies. However, perhaps the most pervasive issue that is arising is that the context in which people are making occupational, vocational, and career decisions is evolving rapidly and unpredictably. This requires the re-thinking of the approaches that will be effective in this new contextual reality, as well as the assumptions that drive them (Borgen & Hiebert, 2014).

Given the altered and rapidly changing context in which career development work is now being conducted, a new set of assumptions regarding career development may be more salient: several factors influence the choice of occupations or career paths, including individual attributes or traits, family expectations, and rapidly evolving cultural influences such as poverty, addiction, conflict, displacement, and discrimination; these factors are differentially important across cultural contexts, but appear to be an influence in most of them; internationalization and rapid and erratic changes in labour market opportunities must be considered, and occupations of choice may not always be accessible; many tasks and processes related to occupations are unstable; and people need the skills and attitudes required to successfully manage rapid and unpredictable changes that characterize many occupations and career trajectories (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006).

As the context of work has changed, so too must our approaches to helping indivduals with securing and maintain employment and further career development. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the changing context has influenced peoples' ability to both secure and maintain employment, and to suggest that, although it will

continue to be helpful to help young people and adults to engage in career-related self-exploration and understanding, this may no longer be sufficient. We will need to assist them in being robust, resilient and sustainable in successfully managing employment transitions and periodic unemployment that may occur as a result of labour market changes that are beyond their control.

The Changing Context of Work

As Savickas (2015) succinctly observes, our careers and lives no longer follow Super's (1957) model of a predictable and linear progression through career stages. Rather, career has evolved into what is often a conglomeration of short-term, contract, or part-time positions that see people changing jobs roughly every five years, and in which "individuals now own their own careers and design their own lives" (Savickas, 2015, p. 136). Temporary work has grown, in part, because it offers employers the advantage of low-cost numerical flexibility and adaptability, and specialization for their labour force in changing market conditions (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Kalleberg, Reynolds, & Marsden, 2003; Peck & Theodore, 2007) while also enabling financial risk to be passed downstream to employees by removing institutionalized benefits like pension plans (Cobb, 2015). Indeed, while temporary employees are the most likely to bear the brunt of layoffs during recessions (Luo, Mann, & Holden, 2010; Wenger & Kalleberg, 2006), their numbers are growing. Between 1990 and 2008, the number of workers in the US temporary help services industry grew from 1.1 to 2.3 million, with temporary workers occupying a wider array of occupations over

the same period (Luo et al., 2010). In Canada, part-time positions accounted for 89 percent of all job creation from 2015 to 2016 (Johal & Thirgood, 2016). Additionally, the number of open-ended contracts tends to decrease as unemployment levels increase. Fewer than 20 percent of US organizations now use only full-time workers (Kalleberg et al., 2003).

The shift in worker expectations of attachment to their jobs marks a change in the psychological contract of work (Kalleberg et al., 2003). Auer (2005) authored a report from the International Labour Office in which he stated that "the long-term employment relationship (and the employment contract) is seen as being part of the defunct Fordist and industrial model" (Auer, 2005, p.5), which relied on mass production, technological progress, semiskilled labour, and increasing wages (in exchange for compromises between big business and organized labour that allowed for special management privileges) (Jessop, B., n.d.). Increasingly, these models are being replaced "by a much more heterogeneous and volatile service sector economy" (Auer, 2005, p. 5). Lyons, Schweitzer, and Ng (2015) demonstrated that there is an increase in job and organizational mobility amongst workers that is amplified across generations, wherein Millennials in their study had nearly twice as many organizational moves per year as Generation Xers. Furthermore, they had nearly three times as many as the Boomer generation, and 4.5 times as many as the Matures. Despite these increases, Lyons et al. (2015) found that there has been only a small increase in the amount of involuntary mobility, suggesting that younger generations may simply be more self-directed in their

career development, approach, activities, and strategies.

Many argue that "the narrative that one can find secure and stable employment is no longer a realistic goal" (Morillon, 2017, para. 7) and that, in Canada, millions of workers, in almost half of all occupations, are at risk of losing their jobs over the next decade due to automation (Johal & Thirgood, 2016). Routine jobs, whether primarily cognitive or manual in nature, are argued to be most at risk of automation (Johal & Thirgood, 2016), while jobs that require expert thinking – or the "ability to solve new problems that cannot be solved by applying rules" (Levy & Murnane, 2004, p. 82) - and complex communication are in growing demand (Levy & Murnane, 2004). Johal and Thirgood (2016) suggest that the trends towards part-time and precarious work growth, wage stagnation, and increased income inequality are likely to accelerate because of continued rapid technological change in the workplace. Johal and Thirgood (2016) cite peer-to-peer platforms such as Uber, and advances in artificial intelligence, as being key drivers in this acceleration. In light of these trends towards non-standard work arrangements, it must be remembered that some people do prefer these types of arrangements to traditional work relationships, as they appreciate the flexibility and increased pay that can sometimes accompany them (Berg, 2016; Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000). Chambel et al. (2016) concluded that "a temporary agency contract does have an inevitable negative impact on workers' well-being" (p. 1215). Nonetheless, temporary-help agency and part-time workers are more likely to have lower pay when compared to full-time workers, and to also lack benefit packages (Kalle-

berg et al., 2000).

The Role of Education in Changing Work and Career Development

Within this new world of work, graduates entering the workforce from all levels of education are not only faced with less predictability and more bewilderment, but also with stiffer competition for work and high demands from employers of applicants (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Van Horn, 2006). To add to the challenges faced by those entering the workforce, it is this group who experience a disproportionate share of the impacts on the labour market during an economic downturn. Furthermore, the now excess supply of college and university graduates in the labour market has led to dramatic increases in competition, unemployment, and underemployment amongst recent graduates (Fogg & Harrington, 2009): something that students themselves hold no illusions about (Tomlinson, 2008). As Cappelli (2008) observes:

> Yes, more education enables an individual to make more money and be less subject to unemployment, but if everyone had that professional degree, they couldn't all make more money. The reason, of course, is because wages are set by supply and demand. Those with professional degrees make more money only when there is a lot of demand for their skills relative to the supply available. (p. 59)

It has been argued that, at least in the US and Australia, the workforce is generally overqualified with no skills shortage (Cappelli, 2008; Taylor, 2005), and that we have no evidence that existing

positions and requirements exceed current education levels (Cappelli, 2008). Despite the saturation of highly trained graduates, 52 percent of US employers say that they have difficulty filling vacant positions due to talent shortages (Cappelli, 2011). Similarly, young people report feeling as though "employers [hold] unrealistic expectations of their skills and abilities given their lack of experience" (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012, p. 4). What's more, more college students than ever are now pursuing vocationally oriented, and highly specialized, course work while US employers seem increasingly reluctant to provide formal apprenticeship programs (Cappelli, 2011). Adding to the challenges of preparing younger generations for tomorrow's workforce, it is estimated that 65% of today's youth will eventually work in roles that do not currently even exist (Morillon, 2017).

Although universities have attempted to improve employment prospects for their students through bringing employability skills training in to the classroom (Prokou, 2008), there is doubt that these skills can be effectively developed here (Cranmer, 2006). Cranmer (2006) argues that more effective approaches to improving graduation employment prospects would be to utilise employment-based training programs and involve employers directly within courses. Indeed, employers' chief concerns with applicants and new employees rarely have to do with education levels, but rather with work-related behaviours and attitudes (Cappelli, 2008). Such immersive training, as proposed by Cranmer (2006), might serve to address these concerns, provide young people with what they feel they need to be supported in the workplace, and to assist students' efforts to

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build their social credentials in such a way as to fit into the changing demands of employers (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012; Tomlinson, 2008); however, Schomburg's (2007) results lead to the conclusion that there is no simple answer to the question of what generates professional success, and that "it is neither the country and the related cultural and structural conditions, nor the institution and programme of study which alone determine individual professional success" (Schomburg, 2007, p. 56). Rather, many factors, such as socio-biographical, competences, study behaviour, and work experiences together contribute to professional success (Schomburg, 2007).

Nonetheless, many universities throughout Europe, North America, and Australia have been building experiential education into students' curriculum through structured work-integrated (WIL) learning initiatives, often with the expenditure of considerable institutional, personal, and industry resources (Billet, Cain, & Hai Le, 2018; Ferns, Smith, & Russell, 2014; Jackson, 2018a; Jackson, 2018b). WIL is considered to be not only work, but also the integration of that work into a purposeful curriculum that allows for the integration of theory, evaluation, and reflection, and which helps to foster the employability of graduates through practical experience that builds career readiness (Dunn et al., 2018; Ferns et al., 2014; Hamilton et al., 2018; Jackson, 2018b). Although many think of cooperative education programs, internships, and practicums when considering WIL, the learning can also be in the form of case studies, virtual or on-campus projects, and industry mentoring (Jackson, 2018b). Indeed, the investment of resources into WIL has been found to be well worth the

returns for economic well-being, as the enhanced employability of these graduates has direct impacts on productivity, sustainability, and innovation (Ferns et al, 2014). In Hamilton et al.'s (2018) review of the WIL literature, it was found that WIL is effective in developing and improving employability by providing an opportunity to apply knowledge to real world problems, and by encouraging students to reflect on their learning. Furthermore, WIL builds the important non-technical skills, discipline, and career self-management, along with professional networking and increased self-confidence that is so important for graduates to carry forward into the rest of their careers (Jackson, 2018b). Hamilton et al. (2018) also highlight the mutual benefits inherent in a WIL program, as employers have the potential to discover early emerging talent, and are supplied a pool of motivated new workers.

The Effectiveness of Career Interventions

The good news is that the evidence points to career interventions as being helpful. A meta-analysis of 268 treatment-control groups showed that career interventions are moderately effective, with individual counselling being the most effective treatment modality; however, it remained unclear what factors contribute to this effectiveness (Whiston, Sexton, & Lassoff, 1998). Similarly, from their meta-analysis Brown and Roche (2016) concluded that career interventions are modestly effective, particularly with respect to improving decidedness, vocational identity, career maturity, and career decision-making self-efficacy beliefs. While Whiston (2011) later amended her assessment of vocational interventions as being

moderately to highly effective, she, and others, have lamented that we still understand very little about what processes produce these positive outcomes (Bernes, Bardick, & Orr, 2007; Whiston, 2011; Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003). Interventions that do not involve a counsellor have repeatedly been found to be less effective than those that do (Omally & Antonelli, 2016), as have interventions which are only computer-based (Whiston et al., 1998; Whiston et al., 2003).

Taking Context into Account

Several theorists have pointed to the need to take the context of the client in to account. For example, Savickas (2010) believes that the career theories which arose during the mid-twentieth century, and which focused on helping individuals to advance through linear career trajectories within organizations, are not adequate for today's world of work. They do not, he argues, account for the uncertain and rapidly changing structures found in the workplace that modern workers must navigate (Savickas, 2010, 2012, 2015). Many now believe that career exploration is more complicated than, and needs to shift away from, simply being a process of discovering facts and reaching a decision (Krieshok, Motl, & Rutt, 2011; Krumboltz, 2011; Pryor, 2010; Savickas, 2007).

Several approaches and theories have been developed and adopted. Life Design works to deconstruct limiting narratives and beliefs held by the client, before creating new narratives that are absent of limiting beliefs, and a subsequent action plan involving real-world action and reflection (Savickas, 2012). Happenstance Learning Theory also argues that counsellors should help

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clients to explore the unpredictable world, as we learn best from our actions. Exploration is said to facilitate the generation of skills, knowledge, and contacts, which should then be debriefed with the counsellor (Krumboltz, 2015). Positive Uncertainty advocates for setting a direction for action, but being open to, and mindful of, other possibilities and opportunities that present themselves. Positive Uncertainty also treats intuition as intelligence, and encourages individuals to gain information, but not to dwell on information-gathering. They must then take meaningful action based on this information and intuition to avoid drawn-out information-gathering and the overthinking of next steps. (Gelatt & Gelatt, 2003). Finally, the Chaos Theory of Careers posits that the world is a complex system which is ultimately unpredictable, and clients are therefore best served by helping them to normalise chance in their lives. Chaos Theory challenges those individuals who believe that linear upwards career trajectories are still the norm, and believes that career counselling should help clients to negotiate the ongoing challenges associated with career, and life, that come from the continuity of chaos (Pryor, 2010).

A common thread through all of these approaches is a movement towards embracing adaptability, and the acceptance of the uncertainty, unpredictability, and decreased job security that can accompany modern careers. Similarly, there is a movement towards advocating that clients engage in continuous learning (Savickas, 2008; Krumboltz, 2010), become more resourceful and open-minded (Krumboltz, 2010), and shift their emphasis away from becoming decided and instead to increasing self-agency (Krieshok, 2001; Krum-

boltz, 2010, 2011). For example, Krumboltz (2011) believes that in place of making a decision, clients should be helped to learn how to create more satisfying lives for themselves. Gelatt's (1989) Positive Uncertainty model, on the other hand, urges people to be cautious about what they want and to be open to new ideas.

Arguments have also been made for deprioritizing the traditional emphasis of decision making through conscious rational and logical means (Gelatt, 1989; Gelatt & Gelatt, 2003; Krieshok, 2001; Krieshok, Black, & McKay, 2009; Krieshok et al., 2011). Gelatt (1989) stated that "the new science should make it clear that the rational, objective approach is not always possible or desirable" (p. 254). Krieshok (2001) argued that not only does most of the processing that occurs in decision making happen at an unconscious level, but that reflecting on those processes can be confusing and detrimental at worst, and futile at best. He labelled this stance as an anti-introspectivist view. Krieshok et al. (2009) suggested a trilateral model of career decision making that employs conscious and unconscious decision-making processes which are mediated by occupational engagement. Krieshok et al. (2011) expanded this further by suggesting that intuition must be fed by real world engagement and experiences, such as job shadows or informational interviews. Other real world engagement options that could be taken into account for post-secondary students and soon to be graduates are externships, internships, cooperative educational opportunities. Conscious processes can then address practical concerns, such as the pay or location of a considered job. This aligns well with Gelatt and Gelatt (2003), who believe that our

tendency when faced with a decision is to seek more information; however, more information can often compound uncertainty and indecisiveness. Instead, they suggest that at some point one must stop asking questions, and instead listen to their intuition and the information they already have to just make a decision.

It also in important to recognize that the way decisions are made, whether based on logic or intuition, will be highly influenced by the culture of the person making it (Arthur, 2017) and the social, economic and cultural systems in which they live (Patton & McMahon, 2015).

Employment Transitions

As already noted, the psychological contract of work has changed, leading more employees to have an asymmetric relationship with employers in which they face contract and fixed-term work that places them at an increased risk of being terminated (Buchholz & Blossfeld, 2012). Such changes involve new expectations about job security, or lack thereof, and employee flexibility (Smissen, Schalk, and Freese, 2013), leading the International Labour Office to argue that the traditional long-term labour contract is now obsolete (Auer, 2005). Furthermore, young people not in education, training, or employment (NEET) can face challenges in transitioning from schooling to full-time employment, particularly since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis (Carcillo, Fernández, Königs, & Minea, 2015; Ryan, 2001). Governments are facing considerable challenges in reducing NEET rates, as these youth often struggle with the complex barriers associated with disadvantaged backgrounds, including inactivity and low education

levels (Carcillo et al., 2015). Indeed, government policies to address the NEET population challenges are often at best ineffective, and at worst harmful (Ryan, 2001). It is therefore important for helping professionals to understand what those who face unemployment experience, so that we can be best positioned to help these individuals/clients (Edwards, 2017).

Borgen and Amundson (1987) looked at the dynamics of unemployment 30 years ago, during a period of economic turmoil and high unemployment in British Columbia, Canada. Workers were unaccustomed to layoffs, and primary wage earners who lost their jobs responded with grief-related lows that followed the stages of grief outlined by Kübler-Ross (1969) (Borgen & Amundson, 1987). The participants' stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression were followed by an acceptance of the job loss, and a new enthusiasm for their job search. This enthusiasm did not persist, as job-search challenges steadily decreased affect through the burnout process described by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980), and predicted by Amundson and Borgen (1982). The initial enthusiasm shifted to stagnation, frustration, and finally apathy (Borgen & Amundson, 1987).

The downward slide that accompanied the job-search phase was punctuated by oscillations, termed the "yo-yo" effect (Borgen & Amundson, 1987, p. 66), that resulted from sharp upwards increases in mood that were driven by hope at potential job prospects, followed by lows at the subsequent failure of securing the job. Participants would again be pulled up by social supports, and possibly new job prospects, only to repeat this pattern again. The long-term trajectory of this pattern was, however, an overall

decrease in mood. Affect would decline during the job-search phase to the point where participants felt worthless and adrift. At this point, participants would either choose to consider new career options and re-train, or re-assess their self-worth in a way that was independent of their career identity; either route would lead to an improvement in affect (Borgen & Amundson, 1987).

In comparing the modern experience of unemployment to Borgen and Amundson (1987), Edwards (2017) found that while overall responses were largely the same, the initial responses of all participants differed. While Edwards (2017) observed grief responses in all non-contract worker participants, he also found that these workers all also had post-work plans in place when their jobs ended. More importantly, these plans served to bolster their moods. Edwards (2017) theorized that this might reflect an increased flexibility or preparedness in modern workers. For those individuals who were contract workers, there appeared to be no grieving response at the end of a contract. This might have resulted from a familiarity with, and anticipation of, a job ending. Rather, for these contract workers, an initially neutral response was followed by a prolonged job-search. This resulted in a steady decrease in affect that mirrored the burnout response, and yo-yo effect, of Borgen and Amundson (1987).

In their related study, Amundson and Borgen (1987) identified helpful and hindering factors in unemployed individuals. Amongst the most commonly reported helpful factors that improved mood were support from family and friends, career changes or plans for retraining, and part-time or temporary work. Amongst the most commonly reported unhelpful factors that

worsened mood were job rejections, financial pressures, an unknown or negative future, and ineffective job search activities. Edwards' (2017) thematic analysis identified all of these factors, though it did not rank order them as Amundson and Borgen (1987) did. Additionally, Edwards (2017) found that most of his non-contract participants suspected their job loss was imminent, while all his contract-based participants obviously had advanced notice of their end date. Furthermore, this suspicion of job loss led to decreases in affect which preceded the actual notification of termination (Edwards, 2017).

Contexts of Unemployment

Edwards (2017) observed four different contexts to job loss: the fixed-term contract worker; the employee who suspected their termination; the employee who was given advanced noticed of their termination; and the employee who was blindsided. Three of these four contexts mirror those found by Borgen and Amundson (1987), with the outlier being that of the fixed term contract worker. The absence of this context from Borgen and Amundson's (1987) findings is symbolic of the changes over the preceding three decades.

We briefly consider ideas for working with individuals within these four contexts of job-loss. Within each, the helper must exercise their judgement about when and how to broach the idea of expanding a job search beyond the preferred vocational area. This can depend on a number of factors, such as financial pressures, client engagement and optimism in their job-search, and their perceived readiness to have such a discussion. Certainly, as clients deepen into a job-search

burnout, it becomes more desirable to encourage them to cast their net wider, as the decision to pursue new vocational directions after prolonged burnout has been related to drastically improved mood (Borgen & Amundson, 1987).

Finally, in all of the following scenarios we must also assess the degree to which clients require education and coaching on conducting an effective job search. Such discussions might range from how to build a resume that shows transferrable skills, to making contact with employers and presenting oneself in a desirable way.

The Fixed-Term Contract Worker

This individual might be the easiest to work with, from both an emotional and job-search self-efficacy standpoint. They may not experience a grief response, and are more likely than other groups to be familiar with having to search for new jobs and to therefore have a developed job-search skillset (Edwards, 2017). The primary focus for these individuals is likely to be on supporting them during their job-search, with interventions focusing on preventing a downward slide in affect and burnout. Recruiting social supports and encouraging engagement in hobbies and other leisure activities is important to reduce the risk of burnout.

The Employee who Suspected Their Termination

We know that individuals who suspect their termination can experience a drop in mood (Edwards, 2017; Mandal, Ayyagari, & Gallo, 2011). This presents an opportunity to intervene early before the beginning of what may become a grieving process, if job loss does

indeed occur. This also, however, presents a risk: if the feelings of anger, resentment, and hopelessness that might accompany this news are made visible to colleagues and supervisors, they may mark an individual for termination (Edwards, 2017), even if this was not, in fact, the organization's plan. That is, organizations can use layoffs as both a genuine means of downsizing, or as a method to conveniently remove lower performers or undesirable individuals (Karren & Sherman, 2012).

This containment needs to be the priority, as we want to prevent a potentially bad situation from becoming even worse. It is after this that we can, as Krumboltz (2015) suggests, help these clients to explore their world. This exploration is done pre-emptively, to give as much time as possible for the client to generate a Plan B.

The Employee who was Given Advanced Notice of Their Termination

The grieving response may begin while still employed (Edwards, 2017). A triage response may be necessary, where the individual's grief must be attended to, alongside helping them to close out their final days of work with professionalism. As in the previous scenario, there is the risk that feelings of shame, anger, and betrayal (Edwards, 2017) may lead to unprofessional actions that could hurt future references and leave the individual with regret. The processing and containment of these feelings, and grief, can then be followed by constructive discussions and actions aimed at exploring options.

The Employee who was Blindsided

If viewed through an optimistic lens, these individuals benefit from not having to manage their emotions while remaining at work, and there is nothing that we can do to help them manage their response to notification. It is likely that, if existing plans are not already in place, that the immediate response to job loss will be a grief reaction. The focus of career work at this point may therefore very well have nothing to do with employment. It seems unlikely that meaningful discussions and exploration can progress until the person who has lost their job has come to a fuller realization of what has happened to them.

The Challenge

In the face of increasing employment precariousness, career counsellors often find themselves working with unemployed individuals who are struggling with burnout and discouragement. Yet it is at this time that these individuals are best served by nourishing their extroversion, self-esteem, highlighting the value and importance of their skills and the transferability of their skills, experience, volunteer work, hobbies, community involvement/ contributions, passion and talents and the broader options for employment based on these factors) conscientiousness, and job search self-efficacy, as these have been shown to relate to effective job search behaviour and likely be of benefit in the job-selection process (Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz, 2001; Karren & Sherman, 2012). Indeed, Ayllón (2013) found that discouragement increases with the length of unemployment, and that the chances of remaining unemployed actually

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increase with this discouragement. Those who are hopeful of finding a new job have almost half the probability of remaining unemployed as those who believe it unlikely that they will find a new job (Ayllón, 2013).

We must therefore intervene strategically (when clients see the need) and as early as possible, to stem the drop in affect that can accompany job loss, or even the suspicion of job loss (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Edwards, 2017). Amongst those clients who value finding enjoyable and meaningful work, the goal should be to help them make plans that excite or interest them by engaging in exploration activities that feed their intuition and reconnect them with a sense of purpose. The challenge, of course, comes from doing this in the context of those who are often grieving or facing job-search burnout, and the possibility that the jobs that fit with their vocational passions, education, skills and experience, or desired work-life balance may not be available, within a landscape of various evolving contexts. There are three influences or forces to consider. Firstly, the societal and economic contexts in many countries are in states of ongoing accelerating change, which have resulted in often unpredictable changes in labour market opportunities. Secondly, North American and European approaches to career development have taken labour market volatility into account in focusing on the need for people to make career/employment decisions with flexibility and intuition to enable them to be in a position to take advantage of labour market opportunities that correspond with their passions or sense of vocation. And thirdly, there is historic and recent research evidence indicating that individuals who become unemployed experience psychological challenges that sap their energy and confidence in seeking future employment, regardless of their employment context.

Within this context the focus of career development to assist people in discovering their interests and passions may be an important part of our work in cultures where this is important, but it may no longer be possible to reliably tie those interests and passions to paid work. In engaging in career planning we may increasingly need to help clients disconnect their sense of vocation from their paid employment in some periods of their lives. If we believe that the concept of career involves the engagement in meaningful activities across the lifespan, it is legitimate to help people in employment transitions to seek to engage in activities which are meaningful to them and which are apart from their employment.

This perspective challenges career counsellors to disconnect their sense of effectiveness from being able to connect clients with employment that matches their vocational passions. It also suggests that career counsellors will need to help clients embed considering jobs that only pay the bills within life activities that contain personally and socially meaningful activities outside their paid employment. This can help clients retain a sense of competence and strength to counteract the feelings of self-doubt experienced in protracted employment transitions, which, in turn, may assist them in maintaining a level of self-confidence that is important in a successful job search. It may also make them more open to accepting jobs that they had not previously considered as a means of easing possible financial, and other, pressures while they wait for employment opportunities that are more connected to their interests and passions.

Both higher levels of self-confidence, and interim employment fit with the emerging major goal of career development activities of helping young people and adults across the lifespan to be psychologically robust during what are often stressful protracted periods of employment transitions. Research has indicated that this distress affects family and friendship relationships, and ultimately one's sense of who they are a person – not just as a worker. This suggests that any consideration of occupational, vocational and career issues needs to take the whole person and his or her context into account (Amundson, Borgen, Iaquinta, Butterfield, & Koert, 2010), and suggests an increased need for career counselling as a part of career development services.

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