



The Canadian Journal
of Career Development

Revue canadienne de
développement de carrière

14

Vol. 13 / No. 1



The Canadian Journal of Career Development/Revue canadienne de développement de carrière

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The Journal is published with the support of the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) through a grant provided by The Counselling Foundation of Canada. The opinions expressed are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*, Memorial University of Newfoundland or CERIC officers, directors or employees.

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ISSN 1499-1845 (Print)/ISSN 1499-1853 (Online)

Printed in Canada/Imprimé au Canada



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Revue canadienne de développement de carrière**

Volume 13, Number 1 2014

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Editorial

Welcome to the thirteenth volume of *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*. We start off the new year with an interesting array of articles focusing on topics such as career success, competencies scales, career concerns, immigrants, models of goal commitments, and career aspirations.

Jacqueline Dahan opens up with the world of middle managers and the various processes that lead to their career success. By putting her findings into metaphors, she aims to assist career practitioners' and counselors' abilities to guide the professional and personal development of those currently in or entering middle management positions.

On the topic of career development practitioners, the article 'Development of the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (MCSJC) Scale for Career Development Practitioners' delves into social justice and the increasing number of career practitioners being asked to assist with this by clients. The authors present the newly developed competencies scale and explain its development and test results.

'Restoring Hope: Responding to Career Concerns of Immigrant Clients' addresses the lack of career theory and counselling strategies available for the specific issues immigrants transitioning in careers experience. Tatjana Elez explores the issues, visualizes the barriers, and provides suggestions for counselling practices.

Amanda Benjamin, José Domene, and Kim Landine discuss the notion of liminal adulthood and how youth construct, conceptualize, and express concerns about adulthood career aspirations and socio-economic context. Current issues, implications for educational practice and policy, and limitations are discussed.

In the final article for this edition, a theoretical model is proposed to address and explain the factors influencing students' commitment to their educational goals. 'A Theoretical Model of the Antecedents of Educational Goal Commitment' will be a worthwhile and interesting read for all career counsellors; particularly for those who provide guidance to students transitioning from secondary to post-secondary.

Finally, a call to the profession. As the Journal continues to grow we are looking for additional peer-reviewers to provide feedback and guidance on submitted work. With the vast array of topics submitted to the journal, we are looking to broaden our reviewer database so to better match our peer-reviewers to article topics. If you are interested in becoming a peer-reviewer for the Journal please contact associate editor Diana Leadbeater for additional details.

Rob Shea
Founding Editor



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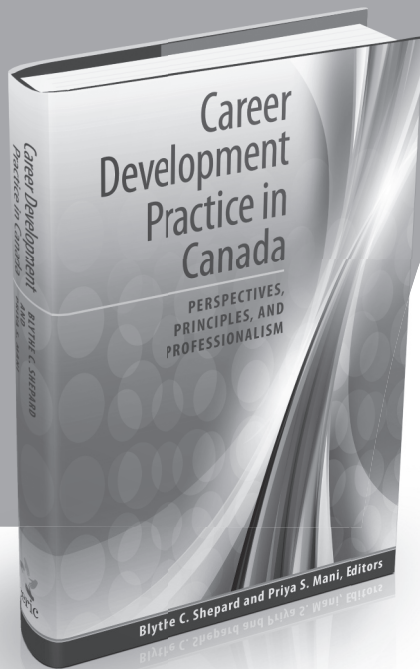
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Metaphors of Career Success: The Case of Middle Managers

Jacqueline Dahan
Université de Sherbrooke

Abstract

This article aims to help career practitioners and counselors better understand the career success of their middle manager clients. The results presented emerge from an exploratory study of the success of middle managers working in the Québec aeronautics industry. Although admittedly not exhaustive, these results form a repertoire of four spatial metaphors that correspond to different views of career success held by middle managers interviewed. The metaphors rest on archetypal vehicles that illustrate the movement and speed of the career path, and the speed at which career success is built. The metaphors used by middle managers depict their chosen positioning relative to that endorsed by the organization. The repertoire can guide middle managers' professional and personal development and help them reflect on their designed positioning relative to the metaphor promoted by the organization.

Résumé

L'article a l'objectif d'alimenter la compréhension des conseillers d'orientation sur le succès en carrière des cadres intermédiaires qui peuvent faire partie de leur clientèle. Les résultats présentés sont issus d'une étude exploratoire sur le succès des

cadres intermédiaires travaillant dans l'industrie aéronautique du Québec. Sans prétendre à l'exhaustivité, ces résultats composent un répertoire de quatre (4) métaphores spatiales rendant compte de différentes représentations du succès en carrière endossées par les cadres intermédiaires interviewés. Les métaphores mettent à profit des véhicules typés qui renseignent sur le mouvement de la trajectoire de carrière, sur la rapidité de celle-ci et sur celle de la construction du succès en carrière. Les métaphores endossées par les cadres intermédiaires sont informatives du positionnement qu'ils choisissent eu égard à celle promue par l'organisation. Le répertoire peut aider le cadre intermédiaire dans son exploration professionnelle et personnelle et dans sa réflexion quant au positionnement qu'il souhaite prendre face à la métaphore organisationnelle.

In recent years, structural changes have redefined the career and career success. Specifically, individuals have become more autonomous in this respect, are assuming greater responsibility for their career success, and are even taking on the role of "life entrepreneur" (Guichard, 2008, p. 431). This process is exemplified in the "life designing" model (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 239), which implies that the role of ca-

reer counsellor is fundamental because the profession consists of helping individuals "question the direction of their personal path and 'create themselves'" (translation of Cohen-Scali & Guichard, 2008, p. 3).

The results of this exploratory study can be useful for career practitioners and counselors who want to better understand the career success of their middle manager clientele. It presents the findings of an exploratory study of the career success of middle managers working in the Québec aeronautics industry. Although admittedly not exhaustive, these results form a repertoire of four spatial metaphors that correspond to different views of career success held by middle managers interviewed.

The Metaphors

In their most rudimentary form, which dates back to Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, metaphors are limited to a poetic role, i.e. embellishing language, and a rhetorical role, i.e. persuasion (Oliveira, 2009, p. 19). A more recent understanding emerging from cognitive science states that the "metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action [...] metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in lan-



guage but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). “Metaphors structure how we perceive, how we think and what we do” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 3); they orient our subsequent experiences and the way we invest in them. Metaphors are useful to understand careers; their epistemological value has been recognized for years (Inkson, 2006; Mignot, 2004; Oliveira, 2009; Smith-Ruig, 2008), as has their praxeological value (Mortlock & Parkin, 2004). For example, Amundson’s (2008) work *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way* discusses the richness and value of metaphors for career counselling and professional and personal exploration. Amundson assert that individuals conceptualize, continuously edit and re-edit their life story, using metaphorical language.

Researchers that explore career and career success have also employed metaphors. Some are well established and legitimized in the literature to account for the complexity of these concepts. For instance, spatial metaphors are often linked to a journey, while other metaphors refer to sports/competition (El-Sawad, 2005). Spatial metaphors convey vertical mobility, hierarchical ascent illustrated by a staircase or pyramid (Barley, 1989; Gunz, 1989). This mobility occurs along a trajectory or path, two spatial metaphors related to the Latin etymology of the word career, “carraria,” which means road or carriage (Arthur &

Lawrence, 1984, p. 1). Used by a carriage, paths (Herriot, 1992) are sometimes associated with a journey along which the career is realized (Nicholson & West, 1989) and success develops. In everyday speech, the metaphors of staircase or the key to success are often used in reference to careers and career success. These two concepts are closely interrelated in the mental schema of society, although researchers contend that they are not exact synonyms. Staircases depict a classic ascending path in an organization. They show that traditional career success entails a gradual hierarchical rise, with a series of promotions (steps on the staircase). The staircase metaphorically translates conformity because it is up to individuals to climb the staircase that the organization offers. If they achieve this, career success follows. This metaphor is similar to military metaphors of discipline in the works of El-Sawad (2005), which translate the importance of the soldier’s demonstrating obedience and conformity (Janowitz, 1968).

In contrast, metaphors related to competition or sports such as racing (Michaud, 2003) connote the Greek roots of the word career. In ancient Greece, career signified a race or tournament where the participants competed and one eventually won (Van Maanen, 1977). The expression “fast track” (Gowler & Legge, 1989) reflects this idea of a competitive tournament (El-Sawad 2005, p. 27). Michaud (2003) used the sports metaphor to describe the career success of high potential executives. She

emphasized the speed of obtaining promotions because it is not sufficient to simply be promoted; the rise should be as fast as possible. The scarcity of promotions available creates a process of competition/comparison between individuals. The race metaphorically explains that career success rests on the idea of exceeding expectations, going above and beyond and outperforming one’s peers. According to the prevailing organizational criteria, when the comparison is positive (i.e., the individuals successfully best or outpace their colleagues), they stand out favorably from the group and enjoy career success.

In recent years, other metaphors, such as that of “boundaryless career” and “protean career” (Briscoe et al., 2012), have surfaced to capture the impact of structural change on career paths. The protean metaphor refers to the Greek and Latin God Proteus, who could reconfigure according to the environment. Like Proteus, the individual’s career can change form, that is transform based on job opportunities that arise. Individuals thus determine the design of their career path. In contrast, the “boundaryless career” is a spatial metaphor similar to that of the often mentioned journey (Inkson, 2006, p. 56). The individual/traveler, also called a nomad (Tremblay, 2003) transcends territorial boundaries and takes a different path from the traditional linear one dictated by the organization. The individual/traveler typically makes several choices that determine how the professional journey will unfold (Inkson, 2006, p. 56). Riverin-Simard



(1984; 1998) also uses the journey metaphor, and argues that it is divided among what he calls three planets which correspond to three different universes: Studies, Work and Retirement. This journey would even be a “waltz in three-quarter time” among these universes, in which equilibrium should be maintained (Limoges, 2007, p. 248). This raises the concept of adaptation, which may lead to self-reinvention, rendered metaphorically by the adjective protean. Similarly, the metaphor of key to success highlights organizational pressure to conform: a key opens a lock only if it fits the mechanism exactly. The concept of fit or match translates the same fundamental idea. The metaphor of key to success does not mean that the lock cylinder must automatically be identical between organizations. Even though the career literature refers to the classic ascending trajectory as standard/generic, that is having fixed characteristics regardless of the organization and context, the metaphorical adjective protean clearly implies that the career and success built is a form of “action” rather than a “generic structure” (Inkson, 2006, p. 56). The paragraphs below describe the research methodology used to examine career success metaphors.

Methodology

To protect the identity of the participants, the two companies of comparable size that participated in the study were given fictitious names: InnoTech and HighTeam. These companies both operate in aeronautics in

Quebec. The Quebec industry represents nearly the entire Canadian aerospace industry. On the international scale, the Quebec aeronautics industry ranks fourth in terms of annual production value, after the United States, France and Great Britain (ISQ, 2009), and is well ahead of the other G7 countries. With over 40,000 employees and sales of nearly US\$12 billion, Quebec, in particular the Montréal region, offers more than one job in aeronautics per 200 inhabitants, equal to the second highest concentration in the world (MDEIE, 2006).

Quebec aeronautics companies have traditionally used one of two generic strategies to boost their competitiveness: 1) differentiation by innovation and 2) domination by operational efficiency.

All respondents in this exploratory study were middle managers between ages 35 and 40. They had accumulated on average 10 years of seniority at the company. Thirty-seven semi-structured interviews of approximately 90 minutes each were conducted between September 2004 and April 2005. First, a list of 25 candidates with various levels of responsibility, representing diverse departments of the company and with potential varying from poor to high, was produced for each participating

company. The executives from each organization helped the researcher by providing her with a large list of potential respondents. Secondly, individual formal invitations to participate in the study were sent directly to each candidate by the researcher. Thus, each individual contacted could feel totally free to participate in the study or not. Seventy-four percent of the candidates accepted the invitation. Eighteen interviews (13 men and 5 women) were conducted at the first company (InnoTech) and nineteen (15 men and 4 women) were conducted at the second company (HighTeam). In addition, a limited number of senior managers were interviewed at the two participating companies (Table 1) to clarify the particular features of the organizational context and the way top managers define individual career success. Data gathered in interviews were supplemented by analysis of information posted on the company website and of some corporate documents.

The four metaphors were conceptualized after themes from the participant interviews were clustered. The data were analyzed with NVivo using a comparison process that began with initial coding of the interview transcriptions according to the following themes: the meaning of

Table 1.
Distribution of Interviews conducted at Each Company

	Interviews conducted	
	InnoTech (strategy of differentiation by innovation)	HighTeam (strategy of domination by operating cost efficiency)
Middle managers	18	19
Top managers	2	4
Total	20	23



career success, the view of career success promoted by the organization and the participants' understanding of the strategic context of their organization. The interview transcriptions were subsequently analyzed many times in alternation. The systematic, structured comparison process brought to light similarities and differences between the transcriptions, and served to identify other themes for the subsequent phases of coding. Lastly, it led to the identification of five dimensions (clustering themes) that structured the metaphors of success.

Results- Metaphors of Career Success

Referring to several types of vehicles, the four metaphors described above express the movement and speed of the career path, and the speed at which

career success is built. They figuratively convey the essentials of a theme underlying each path, namely visibility (Roadster), military esprit de corps and dedication (Humvee), technological development (Hybrid), and work/family balance (Sedan). Each of these metaphors exemplifies middle managers' profound motivations and values.

Roadster: The Formula 1 Racing Car

The Roadster's path to success is a rapid rise. The Roadster metaphorically describes individualistic and flamboyant career success, anchored mainly in individual visibility. Not only must the manager's actions be noticed by his or her peers and superiors, but roadsters are also people who are determined to go further, do more and push the so-called official boundaries to suc-

ceed: *"Unfortunately, doing your work well is not enough. If you stay in your corner, you won't go far. You have to be able to charge ahead, to exceed their expectations."* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 9). The Roadster metaphor translates the value of going above and beyond expectations in managers' definition of career success. This outperformance must be very visible to them. Nonetheless, it is only at InnoTech that the managers define success by exemplary performance coupled with individual visibility: *"If you want more, if you want success, you have to make more of an effort... you have to take the initiative and do more for your company...you have to show that you think positively"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 11).

Middle managers who endorse the Roadster metaphor are positioned in a particular way relative to the view of the success that the organization projects: they buy-in completely to the organization's values and goals. Such middle managers spoke of "ownership," intrapreneurship, actions, and behaviors that translate a feeling that the organization "belongs to them." Therefore, middle managers who see themselves as Roadsters possess a global, complex and refined systemic understanding of the future of the company and its strategic issues.

There is full convergence between the profound motivations and values of these middle managers and the view of success the organization conveys. Middle managers deliberately position themselves as accepting the

Successive series of coding (both organizations in parallel, constant alternating reviews)
Initial coding with three basic themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' views of career success • View of career success endorsed and promoted by the organization • Participants' understanding of strategic organizational context
Second phase of coding with additional themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants' views of career success: 1) individual success, 2) colleagues' success • Organizational recognition • Strategic issues/understanding the organization strategy • Career path
Third phase of coding with additional themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial path, technical path, modern path • Pace of path • Political success • Peer recognition • Personal happiness • Individual visibility • Individual dedication • Evolution of participants' views of career success
Clustering themes with five structural dimensions for each view of career success identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central theme of each view of career success. • Individual tactics for each view of career success • Path associated with each view of career success • Organizational context in which each view of career success is observed • Specific understanding of strategic context in the organization
In light of the clustering themes, four metaphors of career success were identified.



organization's vision of success completely.

The middle managers' individual visibility is not only built through preferred interactions that they develop and maintain strategically with supervisors, directors, or colleagues who will imminently be promoted to such positions. It is also built through the managers' actions, the positive impact of which is naturally well publicized given that their allies already occupy higher hierarchical positions. However, given these alliances, and the search for individual visibility and for short-term promotion, success is often perceived by other managers as resulting from an illegitimate political process: "You can be very visible without having done much, by stealing credit from others. Oh yes! In a large company like this, there are usurpers" (InnoTech, operations, no. 19). Being the target of negative perception is one of the risks managers incur.

The risk is aggravated for those who opt for outperformance and commit themselves in going above and beyond organizational expectations: "Performance is often accompanied by the hero syndrome...but it comes with the risk of wanting to do too much" (InnoTech, R&D, no. 14).

Another basic characteristic of the Roadster metaphor is that career success also rests on middle managers' feeling of true "happiness in going to work" each morning: "Being in a position where we are always unhappy every day, it's not really success" (InnoTech, R&D, no. 10).

Humvee: A Military Vehicle That Transports A Team Dedicated To Their Country

With the Humvee, the path to success is a slower ascent than for Roadsters. The Humvee metaphorically translates a path in which the middle managers' individual success is built through the expression of high esprit de corps, enthusiasm, and dedication to the team and to the organization. This involves a filial pride by middle managers in "giving their life" to the organization: "I have the company's name tattooed on my heart" (HighTeam, operations, no.2). "Success rests not only on the attainment of objectives assigned by top management but also on your willingness to do more, initiatives you take to exceed the objectives and therefore your capacity to deliver more than what the organization expects" (HighTeam, operations, no. 10). Like the Roadster, going above and beyond is emphasized. Nonetheless, conformity entails a particular relation, a near fusion with the group: "We all say 'I want to die here. I want to be here until I retire!'" (HighTeam, operations, no. 2).

Note that it is not only at HighTeam that the executives define success by outperformance marked by team visibility, dedication to the organization and unflagging demonstration of exemplary team spirit: "You are considered a stakeholder of the organization vision to realize. It's good to eliminate all unhealthy competition" (HighTeam, operations, no. 9). The adjective unhealthy is indeed related to the

taboo on individual visibility, which reflects the importance placed on the team. Accordingly, the perception of political success, that is success that is illegitimate or not resting on teamwork, is particularly acute: "Here it is important not to project oneself as someone who wants to scale the echelons... Talking about oneself and one's success is not accepted here" (HighTeam, operations, no. 16).

Middle managers who adopt the Humvee metaphor are proud to dedicate years of service to "their" organization. They think, talk, and act like an "intrapreneur" (entrepreneurial spirit, within an organization) and strive to gain a global systemic understanding of the future of the organization and its strategic issues. The expression "their" organization indicates that such middle managers are positioned very favorably relative to the company's view of success (HighTeam). Nonetheless, although they shared its meaning completely, they also value the feeling of being happy at work, which also structures their view of success: "Career success also means wanting to work the next day. It also comes from you" (HighTeam, operations, no. 9). This is another similarity with the previous metaphor.

The Hybrid: A Modern High Tech Vehicle That Uses Two Energy Sources

The hybrid metaphorically evokes a career path through which career success is built slowly, that is through various imposing complex projects,



each offering diverse important scientific challenges that gradually fuel the middle manager's personal development. This metaphor also conveys science-based individual visibility because the expertise on which success is built is not widely shared in the organization: *"I have become a type of knowledge centre in this particular technological area. Colleagues from here and elsewhere, other plants, come see me. I even get calls from Singapore or England"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 4).

Middle managers who embrace the Hybrid metaphor aspire to the status of legend within the company through a major scientific discovery that effectively drives the company to a leadership position in its industry: *"finding a solution can transform you into a god in the company because of the impacts of the discovery"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 5).

Hybrid middle managers' understanding of their organization focuses on internal technological development processes or technological improvement. The fact that this metaphor was observed only at InnoTech is easily explained by the fact that the main research and development activities at HighTeam took place at the head office located in another city, unlike at InnoTech.

Because of their scientific, and therefore very limited, understanding of the organization, middle managers who endorse this metaphor position themselves at odds with the view of success promoted by the organization. They have a shared positioning: they partially endorse the organization's view of

success put, but also demonstrate a strong conviction that this success necessarily rests on their professional development. These middle managers justify their rejection of the managerial versatility inherent in the organization's view of success by arguing that it constrains their scientific and technological advancement. The organization's recognition of managerial versatility thus clashes with the recognition granted to individuals that have achieved success as a confirmed expert: *"We do not all aspire to be president. Me, I would rather have a technically very strong colleague on my team, someone who can understand all the technological problems. It's people like that who make our team stronger ... and successfully defend us, when necessary, during technical meetings"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 2).

A final characteristic of the Hybrid metaphor has also been observed in the previous case: like the Humvees, these middle managers feel that career success rests firmly on the feeling of being happy at work: *"Success is also a question of personal choice. It's what makes us happy"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 5).

The Sedan: A Spacious Vehicle Designed for Family Outings

The Sedan metaphorically evokes a career path within which career success is built slowly, to ensure the harmonization of work and personal life. This metaphor rejects the classic linear path in which a series of hierarchical promotions are ac-

companied by growing and therefore increasingly heavy *managerial responsibilities*: *"Not everyone wants to be president of the company"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 16). *"I'm not trying to over-perform; I want to be recognized, to gain recognition, to be appreciated, but it shouldn't take up too much space in my life either"* (HighTeam, operations, no. 17). According to this metaphor, success lies not in the prestige of the position held, but in the balance between work life and personal life, a balance the middle manager painstakingly selects, builds, and protects: *"Success is someone who has a balanced personal life, that is someone who can achieve a balance between professional life and family life"* (HighTeam, operations, no. 3). Although the previous metaphors integrated the feeling of being happy at work, this quality is fundamental to the Sedan metaphor: *"Career success means being true to what we love to do"* (HighTeam, operations, no. 17); *"When our work reflects who we are, that's success"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 17).

Middle managers' constant effort to preserve work/life balance leads them to remain independent from the organization; this freedom is particularly precious for them. Freedom is translated by the rejection of supervisors' invitations to apply for higher positions in the hierarchy: *"I do not want to rise in the hierarchy. My current work is enough for me"* (InnoTech, R&D, no. 17); *"Some of my colleagues, like me, even refused to apply for higher positions although our immediate supervisor*



strongly encourages us to. We refused because the promotion for us would be equivalent to losing our independence” (HighTeam, R&D, no. 18). This freedom that the middle managers mention reflects their need to respect their authenticity or the unique nature of their being. It also expresses their profound conviction that conformism hinders the success of the organization and that it is respect for every employee and their work/life balance that fuels the real creative capacity of the organization: “Society places enormous importance on the status of the position held, the salary you earn, the kind of car you drive and things like that. It is only one aspect of success. We’re all different. Diversity is not a hindrance to organizational success: it’s an advantage” (InnoTech, R&D, no. 15).

Lastly, the Sedan metaphor corresponds to an understanding of the organization and its strategic context that is restricted to the parameters of the managers’ responsibilities. Largely targeting the operational short-term level, it is well grounded in the present moment.

Evolution of Metaphors

The interviews conducted highlight changes in metaphors triggered by the organizational context. At InnoTech, managers evolved from Hybrids to Roadsters, whereas at HighTeam, both the Humvee and the Sedan were reinforced.

At InnoTech, senior managers regularly screen employees and identify, among the managers they supervise, the most promis-

ing successors who can follow their example. These executives seek to cultivate in targeted managers potential conformity with their own success. Senior managers then begin a negotiation process intended to instill in their potential successors the preferred metaphor-the Roadster: “In each context, our definition of success changes. I started by telling myself that professional development was the criterion ... Before, for me success was ‘are you good technically?’ For me it was ‘does he know what he’s talking about?’ ... I wanted to do a PhD but instead my immediate supervisor gave me management tasks. I didn’t want to, but he convinced me ... I think that was when I had a change of paradigm in my career InnoTech, operations, no. 14).

ing vision of quality, and value-added management, along with accentuated objectives related to efficiency. Senior managers’ discourse conveyed this new vision and the related implications for managers’ individual success. The interviews show that for some this reinforced the adherence to the Humvee metaphor: “We felt a positive turn begin, a turn in the sense that we are more oriented toward objectives, meeting objectives is primordial...Are you engaged, mobilized to meet these new objectives? The organization recognizes it. It is the company that changed, so success did too” (HighTeam, operations, no. 2).

Nonetheless, in parallel with this reinforcement of the Humvee, there was a reinforcement of the Sedan, that is an even

Repertoire of metaphors for success

	Roadster Formula 1 racing car	Humvee Military Vehicle That Transports a Team Dedicated to Their Country	Hybrid A Modern High Tech Vehicle That Uses Two Energy Sources	Sedan A Spacious Vehicle Designed For Family Outings
Frame of definition of success	Organization	Organization	Organization, scientific community	Organization and family
Individual tactics	Investment in alliances with top managers	Investment in the team	Investment in professional development	Investment in work/life balance
Path	Ascending, rapid	Ascending, slow	Slow spiral (through scientific projects)	Slow ascending, spiral, or transitory
Context	Innovation	Efficiency	Innovation	Innovation and efficiency
Understanding of strategic context	Systemic, global long-term vision	Systemic, global long-term vision	Understanding restricted to internal technological development or improvement processes long-term vision	Understanding moderated by the future of the company, targeted to operations, in a vision of the present moment

At HighTeam, a change in CEO ushered in a more demand-

more pronounced withdrawal from the new metaphor of suc-



cess promoted by the organization by middle managers who already identified with the Sedan: “*Before this change, we were more autonomous here. We began to feel like they were imposing things that will be even more complicated. It’s a work surplus.... I say no to that!*” (HighTeam, operations, no. 16).

Discussion

The objective of this article was to help career practitioners and counsellors better understand the career success of middle managers who may be among their clientele. Because managers are increasingly asked to be more autonomous in their careers and career success, informed coaching by a career practitioner has become even more strategic. Counsellors can also help their clients achieve a balance between who they are, how they choose to position themselves relative to the organization’s metaphor of success, and how they choose to revise/adapt their positioning to organizational change and life design (Guichard 2008). Keeping this balance implies individual choices related to conformity and even going above and beyond, which the organization may unofficially demand.

Although admittedly not exhaustive, these results form a repertoire of four spatial metaphors: the Roadster (individual visibility), the Humvee (esprit de corps), the Hybrid (professional development), and the Sedan (harmonization of work life and personal life). These metaphors are useful because

they facilitate professional and personal exploration by raising questions that can help middle managers determine which metaphors are most salient for them and why? Which metaphors, in their view, are emphasized the most at the workplace? How can they choose to position themselves relative to these metaphors and why?

Because all these questions refer to middle managers’ profound motivations and values, the metaphor is decidedly distinct from a déjà-vu of Schein’s classic career anchors (1978). On the one hand, each metaphor reflects a dimension of success for oneself, such as the importance of doing work that reflects one’s values and profound motivations (e.g., the need to feel happy at work, mentioned in the interviews). On the other hand, metaphors indicate the dimension of success for others, such as the importance of adapting to one’s context and the choice of individual positioning relative to the metaphor promoted by the organization. Further, if anchors are static, as Mercure et al. (1991) contend, metaphors are not. Because they are embedded in a context, they evolve with it. A change in CEO, as occurred at HighTeam, or an institutionalized negotiation process such as that found at InnoTech, may modify the metaphor middle managers adopt.

In Hartung’s review of the last decade of career counselling (2009) he identifies four historical milestones in this evolving field. Career anchors belong to the differential tradition of the early 20th century, whereas the

present repertoire of metaphors is more consistent with the social-cognitive tradition (last quarter of the 20th century), which contextualizes career success. This model emphasizes the contractual relationship between the individual and the organization, which is illustrated by the middle manager’s positioning relative to the metaphor of success promoted by the organization. The repertoire can also be seen as being subordinate to the constructivist-social constructionist model (early 21st century) because the observed evolution of metaphors supports the idea that middle managers construct “their” reality based on their understanding of their contextualized experiences. Their reflexive understanding influences their interactions and actions, just as their thoughts are influenced by their positioning relative to the outperformance valued by and in the organization.

The results also showed that the classic path *is not unique*. The repertoire points to two classic linear trajectories in which success is built differently. The first rests on individual visibility and refers to the metaphor of the Roadster. The second rests on high esprit de corps and refers to the Humvee metaphor in which individual visibility is, in contrast, taboo. These two classic career success paths share rapid hierarchical linearity and pressure to exceed expectations, go above and beyond and outperform one’s peers. However, they differ fundamentally in the contextual significance of this outperformance. Future research might explore different organizational contexts to determine



whether the classic ascending path has additional forms of expression. In addition, if the results presented here have not demonstrated differences between male and female participants, future research could consist in a comparative analysis in another field. Research published to date has implied that gender-based differences indeed exist (see Orser & Leck, 2010, or Eddleston et al., 2004).

Lastly, the study has limitations arising from its exploratory approach, and its field uniquely comprising middle managers in the Québec aeronautics industry. The transferability and validity of this repertoire, therefore, remains to be confirmed: can it be observed among people working in other organizational contexts or industries? Further research could attempt to answer this question.

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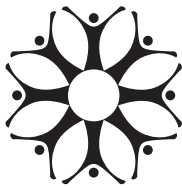


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Development of the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (MCSJC) Scale for Career Development Practitioners

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Acknowledgement

Preparation of this manuscript was partially funded by a Standard Research Grant awarded to Arthur and Collins from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Abstract

Career practitioners are increasingly called to engage in social justice action with or on behalf of their clients. However, there is a dearth of well-researched information on the kinds of competencies required of career practitioners to support a social justice agenda. The multicultural counselling competencies commonly referenced in the literature are limited in their application to career practice, social justice actions, and the complex interface of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic status, and religion. The measures that have been developed to assess multicultural competency, therefore, share these limitations as well as other conceptual challenges. This study focuses specifically on the creation of a tool for assessing the multicultural counselling and social justice competencies of career practitioners, based on current theoretical, research, and applied practice knowledge and a deliberate emphasis on social jus-

tice. Development and testing of the Multicultural Counselling and Social Justice Competencies scale are detailed.

There has been a specific call within the field of career development to return to its early focus on social justice issues (Blustein, 2006; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Sampson, Dozier, & Colvin, 2011). Social justice has been conceptualized in many ways (Watson, 2010). Career practitioners themselves attach multiple meanings to the concept of social justice as it relates to career development (Author2, Author1, Author3, & Marshall, 2009). In their review of the literature, Author2 and colleagues (2009) synthesized three core components of social justice: "(a) fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, (b) direct action to ameliorate oppression and marginalization within society, and (c) full inclusion and participation of all members of society in a way that enables them to reach their potential" (p. 23). In the context of career development, specific examples include: inequities in access to education or career development resources; discriminant barriers to job entry, success, or advancement; and differential experience of employed,

unemployed, or underemployed status in society.

It has become increasingly clear in the literature, as well as in our observations of professional practice, that various forms of cultural oppression have a direct impact on the lived experiences of our clients, as individuals and as non-dominant communities, and that the experience of social injustice is often tied to cultural group affiliation (Author2, 2008; Author2 & Author1, 2011; Leong, 2010). What is also increasingly acknowledged is the importance of broadening the focus of attention from factors within the individual to the broader organizational, social, economic, and/or political systems that impact people's career development (Author2, 2008; Author2 et al., 2009). Applying a social justice lens to career development practice has implications for how people's career-related issues are viewed and the direction of relevant interventions. It is insufficient to simply increase awareness of the cultural, contextual, and societal influences on people's career development; career practitioners are being called to actively engage in challenging the organizational, institutional, community, and broader social, economic, and political systems that lead to marginalization and social injus-



tices (Fouad et al., 2006; Horne & Matthews, 2006). As a result, career practitioners are increasingly expected to design and implement interventions and to engage in advocacy and other social justice activities within these broader systems. This raises a question about how to prepare career practitioners with competencies that support social justice action and advocacy (Author2, 2005, 2008; Author3, Author2, & Author1, 2008a).

This study is unique in its focus specifically on the creation of a tool for assessing the multicultural counselling and social justice competencies of career practitioners, based on current theoretical, research, and applied practice knowledge and a deliberate emphasis on social justice. The development of the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (MCSJC) instrument, described below, was intended to provide a foundation for identifying multicultural and social justice competencies of particular importance to career development practices. We begin by providing an overview of the conceptual framework used as a foundation for the development of the MCSJC. The next section provides a detailed description of the instrument development process. Then we describe the implementation of the MCSJC with a group of Canadian career practitioners and the process of further refining the instrument, based on analysis of this data. We conclude with a discussion of limitations of the current study, potential practical applications of the MCSJC scale, and implications for strengthening the com-

mitment to social justice in career development practices.

Culture-Infused Counselling Model

This current study is based on the Culture-infused counselling (CIC) model that Author1 and Author2 (2010a, 2010b, 2010c) proposed as conceptual enhancement of the Sue et al. (1982) and Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992) multicultural counselling competencies framework. This CIC model has more recently been adapted for application in career development practice (Author2 & Author1, 2011). The CIC model emphasized three domains of practice. The first domain is counsellor self-awareness, which includes understanding of one's personal cultural identity(ies), one's position of relative privilege within society, and any potential biases towards individual or groups with particularly cultural backgrounds. Second, the awareness of others' cultures domain includes sensitivity to a broad range of cultural factors (age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and socioeconomic status) and the common experience of cultural oppression based on group affiliation. The third domain focuses attention to the influences of culture on the working alliance, centralizing the relationship between counsellor and client in the bridging of worldviews and the collaborative negotiation of counselling goals and processes.

The definition of culture was expanded in the CIC model to be inclusive of additional cul-

tural identity factors (gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic status, religion), arguing that ethnicity is one of many factors that form a complex interface to define an individual cultural self-identification. Each of these elements and the interplay among them form important considerations in coming to a full understanding of the individual and her/his social location (Author1, 2010). The CIC model also assumes that all counselling is multicultural to some degree; both counsellor and client bring their unique combination of cultural identities to the relationship. Author1 and Author2 (2010a, 2010b) argue that the construct of the working alliance provides a more transtheoretical and conceptually inclusive category than appropriate skills/techniques (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992) as the third competency domain. It is in the context of this working alliance between counsellor and client that cultural inquiry takes place and that the appropriate locus of change is identified, which may include social justice interventions such as client empowerment, consciousness raising, advocacy, or other systems change processes. Another strength of the CIC model is the centrality of social justice in case conceptualization and intervention planning. It emphasizes the importance of developing relevant and effective interventions directly with clients, while inviting career practitioners to design interventions that go beyond simply helping clients cope with or adapt to oppressive social and systemic conditions to targeting change in



these contextual career barriers. The emergent framework of CIC competencies (Author1 & Author2, 2010a, 2010b) forms the foundation for the instrument development in this study.

Context of the Study

The development of the MCSJC scale was part of a larger cross-national study of career practitioners' competencies related to cultural diversity and social justice in Canada and Australia. Ethics approval was obtained from the three universities where the researchers are affiliated. Several components of the study have been published, focusing on the qualitative data from the Canadian sample (Author2 et al., 2009; Author2, Author1, Marshall, & Author3, in press) and the Australian sample (Author3, Author2, & Author1, 2008a, 2008b). This paper focuses exclusively on the development and validation of the competency assessment instrument that was embedded in the broader study. One of the purposes of this sub-study was to expand the CIC model to reinforce a stronger focus on social justice. There were two distinct phases to the sub-study described in this paper: (a) instrument development and (b) data collection and empirical validation of the instrument.

Instrument Development

Conceptual Framework

The conceptualization and identification of multicultural and social justice competencies was rooted in the CIC model, itself

based on a comprehensive review of the literature prior to 2005 (Author1 & Author2, 2005). A review of more recent research was then conducted, with a particular focus on emergent social justice competencies, as well as multicultural and social justice competencies specific to career counselling. Career development theories were reviewed to determine cultural influences on career development and critique models of career counselling practice with non-dominant populations. We reviewed the multicultural counselling literature to identify competency frameworks and standardized instruments on multicultural counselling competencies. The national standards and guidelines for career practitioners in both Canada and Australia were also reviewed for item content. Based on these comprehensive reviews, we retained the three-fold structure of the CIC model and created a revised taxonomy of multicultural and social justice competencies. The model was sufficiently robust to accommodate the new competency additions.

Taxonomy of multicultural and social justice competencies. The taxonomy remained organized according to the three core domains of the original CIC model, resulting in a revision to that model (Author1 & Author2, 2010a):

1. Cultural Self-Awareness: Active awareness of personal assumptions, values, and biases

2. Awareness of Client Cultural Identities: Understanding the worldview of the client
3. Culturally-Sensitive Working Alliance

Based on the critique of both the traditional multicultural counselling competencies frameworks (Author1 & Author2, 2010a, 2010b) and the critical analysis of previous assessment tools, several key operating assumptions emerged to undergird this taxonomy. First, some earlier instruments included more general counselling skills (based on the assumption of overlap between counselling and multicultural counselling) (Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). However, we did not include what we considered general counselling competencies, in an attempt to be more discriminating and precise about the additional competencies required for multicultural and social justice practice.

Second, we operated from a broad definition of culture. In the case of earlier instruments, the focus was on primarily ethnic/racial diversity. Constantine, Gloria, and Ladany (2002) noted the narrow definition of cultural as a limitation of earlier instruments and called for future research to assess self-perceived competence in working with clients from multiple non-dominant populations. Hays (2008) made the same observation in her review and noted this as a major limitation of these tools.

Third, we attempted to address the conceptual ambiguity in early instruments. Constantine



et al. (2002) noted ambiguity in wording and unclear relationships between the items in various scales and the constructs they represented. We placed primacy on the three core constructs of the CIC model and then broke each of them down into specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills (AKS) statements. Similar to Sue et al. (1992), this created a 3 x 3 matrix of competencies. Each specific competency was clearly worded as a learning objective, beginning with an active verb that reflected the intended category of learning – attitudes, knowledge, or skills – drawing on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning objectives. See the below examples of items from the final instrument:

- Attitudes Q1: Believe in the equal worth of all people.
- Knowledge Q2: Explain how belonging to particular groups can lead to certain privileges in society.
- Skills Q5: Empower clients to influence external factors affecting career development.

First draft of the MCSJC instrument. The taxonomy of multicultural and social justice competencies was a separate product designed for educational rather than assessment purposes. For the purpose of the instrument development, the number of items was then substantively reduced through detailed item analysis to identify higher order constructs and to eliminate redundancies. The items were also re-organized under the categories of attitudes, knowledge, and skills (AKS) to create the first draft of the

MCSJC instrument. The rationale for re-organizing the items into an AKS listing was simply for ease of conceptual clarity for respondents.

One of the unique features of this instrument was that it contained two 5-point Likert scales for each item: The first was designed to assess the importance of the item to the profession, and the second was a self-assessment of personal competency level. We made this choice as a means of also including respondents in the process of determining direction for the profession, rather than simply lining them up against assumed professional standards.

Expert Review

International experts in the multicultural counselling and career development fields (N=10) were then invited to critique the selected items and offer opinion about the face/content validity of the items (Constantine et al., 2002) and user-friendliness of the questionnaire. The experts were recognized leaders in research, applied practice, or policy development, who were not directly connected to the authors' research. A modified Delphi approach (Author1, 1998) was used with two rounds of feedback, providing opportunity for the experts to respond to changes suggested by their peers. This step guarded against researcher bias while providing expert opinion at the development stage of questionnaire construction. The expert reviewers were asked to first complete the draft MCSJC as if they were a respondent in the

study and then to critically analyze the questionnaire to: (a) add any additional items that were important to the comprehensiveness of the survey; (b) indicate any current items that should be eliminated from the survey, because they are not central to the assessment of social justice competence; and (c) provide feedback on the wording of items that may enhance the effectiveness of the survey.

Round 1. The first draft of the instrument presented to reviewers contained 57 items, organized according to attitudes and beliefs (17 items), knowledge (15 items), and skills (25 items). Reviewers provided feedback on the overall survey; however, the focus here is exclusively on the items contained in the MCSJC scale. The feedback from reviewers clustered into several themes:

Invitational language.

There was a caution from reviewers about the use of terminology or lingo related to social justice for two separate reasons: (a) Social justice may be outside the scope of practice and the current professional understanding of many counsellors, and (b) any subtle overlay of expectation to engage in social justice may result in defensiveness or a sense of being *assessed*. A definition of what the researchers meant by the concept of *social justice* was added to the MCSJC scale to address these concerns.

Empowerment language.

The choice of verbs, in particular, was critically analyzed in terms



of two potential inferences: (a) The degree of implied counsellor power was softened (e.g., *effect change* versus *facilitate* or *mobilize* versus *utilize opportunities*), and (b) the degree of client control or expertise was strengthened (e.g., more client-centred language).

Inclusive language.

There was also some concern about limiting the focus to non-dominant populations, so a broader group terminology was adopted in some questions. However, it was also clear that the relationship of social justice to cultural oppression of particular non-dominant groups was essential. In addition, the implication of a right *answer* in certain phrasing was noted (e.g., describe *the* theory... versus describe *potential* dilemmas...)

Shared meaning/understanding. There was tension related to the breadth/depth of items – e.g., breaking competencies down into specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills, which are then isolated from contextual considerations that may affect how the competency is interpreted and assessed. In addition, there were concerns that some items assumed a conceptual understanding that not all career practitioners would possess.

Comprehensiveness versus specificity. Some items potentially contained multiple constructs or applied a construct to more than one population or context. A number of items were reworded to contain a stem with a number of sub-points to address

this concern. There was also a concern that one survey could not provide a comprehensive overview of multicultural and social justice competence, so trade offs would need to be made. The length of the overall survey in which the MCSJC was embedded was a concern in terms of potential response and completion rates.

Importance and competence scales. Apart from concerns about length of the instrument, the reviewers supported the dual-scale approach, noting their own reactions to reflection on expectations related to the profession versus their own personal competency levels. They suggested minor modifications to the layout of the instrument, such as making it easier to separate professional expectations and personal competence, noting: “It was interesting to me that, though I held a strong belief in most of the items, it was in the personal degree of competency and skill that greater variances appeared in my answers.” “I found myself answering the same for both the profession as for myself, even unconsciously... I think in part because I hold the belief that if I believe it is important for the profession than I ought to also hold that belief...” These changes addressed reviewer concerns for the second round of review.

Round 2. The same experts were asked to review the second draft of the instrument, which now contained 80 items: 21 attitudes, 26 knowledge, and 33 skills competencies. Although

the number of items increased, most items were shorter, more concise, and contained less potential for overlapping constructs or misinterpretation. The feedback from the second round included the following key points.

Refining the Likert

scales. All reviews were comfortable with the wording of the Importance scale as “designed to assess your personal perspective on the importance of social justice to career development practice generally.” Concern was expressed that the description of Competence scale might still encourage responses impacted by *social desirability*: The scale “...provides an indication of your self-assessment of *professional competence* on each item” so the wording was changed to “...indicates the degree to which you personally feel competent...” The scales were then labeled simply “Importance to Career Practice” and “Current Competency Level” with 5-point Likert Scales (1 = *very low*, 2 = *moderately low*, 3 = *average*, 4 = *moderately high*, and 5 = *very high*).

Revision of wording.

Some fine-tuning of wording was required to ensure clarity of item stems and sub-points, to ensure all of the earlier critiques were fully addressed, to ensure clarity and reduce any remaining redundancy in the constructs, and to again simplify the language for practitioners responding to the survey. The word *beliefs* was also removed from the heading of the first section, *Attitudes and beliefs related to social justice*, to clearly communicate the AKS



structure and level of learning targeted and to avoid confusion with what we consider a sub-construct of attitudes (e.g. attitudes are reflected in and through particular beliefs, values, biases, etc.).

Empirical Validation of the MCSJC Scale

The final version of the MCSJC instrument used in this study consisted of 82 self-report statements, organized according to attitudes (20 items), knowledge (25 items), and skills (37 items). These items were rated in terms of *Importance and Competence*, using the scales described above. For the purposes of the data analysis, in items with stems and sub-points, each sub-point was treated as a distinct item. For example, the following Attitudes Q12 contained three items.

Believe that career development practitioners have a role to play in influencing:

1. Community development
2. Organizational development
3. Broader social, economic, and political systems

The survey was conducted online with invitations extended through professional organizations and networks. Participants completed a consent form and were offered a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to a bookstore for completing the survey. Only participants from Canada were included in this portion of the study.

Participants

All 180 participants were Canadian and were at least 18 years of age. Participants came from nearly every territory and province, with the majority from Alberta (31%), British Columbia (19%) and Ontario (19%). Over 75% were between the ages of 30 – 59, and 75% were female. 47% of participants had between 3-10 years of work experience, and 47% had 11-20+ years. The majority of participants identified as Caucasian Canadian (97%). The majority worked for career and employment centres (19%), non-profit organizations (16%), and public universities (13%), although numerous other career counselling settings were represented.

Results and Discussion

Although the original survey items were organized according to the AKS framework, for the purposes of the factor analysis, the items were re-organized according to the CIC conceptual model, based on the following rationale. First, the subjects-to-variables (STV) ratio was too small to conduct a factor analysis on the entire data set, but the STV ratios were acceptable for the three sub-scales. Second, as noted above, the empirical studies on other instruments have not supported the traditional AKS factor structure. Third, building on the conceptual/theoretical arguments presented here and elsewhere, the intent of the study was to explore the components of the three a priori sub-scales of the CIC model. Fourth, we were in-

terested in the core constructs that contribute to each of these superordinate conceptual categories. Two separate exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the data from each of the rating scales: *Importance to Career Counselling* and *Current Competency Level* of participants.

Exploratory Factor Analysis I: Importance Ratings

A principal components factor analysis was conducted on the items on each of the sub-scales, with no factor solution specified. There is some debate about statistical approaches to factor analysis; however, “principal components with varimax rotation and the Kaiser criterion” remain most widely used (Costello & Osborne, 2005, p.8). The factor solution for each of the sub-scales was selected based on both meaningfulness/interpretability of the factors and scree plot of eigenvalues (Kim, Cartwright, Asay, & D’Andrea, 2003; Sodowsky et al., 1994). The selected factor solution was then submitted to oblique rotation process. Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was used to calculate the item loadings on each factor. Items with factors loadings greater than .50 were included. Items scoring below this cut off or loading on multiple factors were removed (Kim et al., 2003; Sodowsky et al., 1994). The test of internal reliability on the *Importance* ratings for the complete instrument was .91.



Cultural self-awareness: Active awareness of personal assumptions, values, and biases. This sub-scale contained 10 items. Two factors were identified with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. Together, these factors accounted for 62.08% of the variance. The rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Awareness of client cultural identities: Understanding the worldview of the client (28 items). The combination of the 6 emergent factors explained 78.34% of the variance. The rotation converged in 6 iterations. Factor solutions of 2, 3, 4, and 5 factors were also examined; however, they yielded less interpretable solutions, had items with lower factor loadings, and accounted for less of the overall variance.

Culturally-sensitive working alliance (44 items). The combination of the 6 factors explained 72.13% of the variance. The rotation converged in 22 iterations. In this case, factor solutions of 7 and 8 were also examined, because these yielded eigenvalues greater than 1.00, along with those based on fewer factors. However, the strongest and most consistent item factor loadings and best conceptual fit emerged with the six-factor solution.

As a result of these three exploratory factor analyses, the overall conceptual framework for the instrument in Table 1 emerged. The eigenvalues and percent variance for each of the factors is provided, along with

the total variance from the selected factor solution.

Three members of the research team collaborated in assigning construct names to the

Table 1

Factor Structure: Importance Ratings

	Self-Awareness		Awareness of Others		Working Alliance	
	Eigenvalue	Percent Variance	Eigenvalue	Percent Variance	Eigenvalue	Percent Variance
Factor 1	4.792	47.919	12.825	20.774	21.606	49.104
Factor 2	1.416	14.165	3.253	19.968	3.534	8.033
Factor 3			2.034	18.157	2.039	4.635
Factor 4			1.533	8.567	1.894	4.304
Factor 5			1.176	5.474	1.355	3.080
Factor 6			1.118	5.416	1.307	2.969
Total Variance		62.083		78.357		72.125

factors within each sub-scale. Sodowsky et al. (1994) presented a conceptual model that hypothesized the possibility of a higher order general multicultural counselling factor, with four first order factors accounting for the item clusters. The theoretical/conceptual argument in this paper, as well as the results of this study, suggest the possibility of a more complex conceptual model, one that potentially identifies second order factors, within the a priori three-fold conceptualization of multicultural counselling competencies. See Figure 1. These second order factors offer meaningful and applicable constructs for both training and assessment purposes.

Exploratory Factor Analysis II: Competence Ratings

A principal components factor analysis was also conducted on the items on each of the sub-scales based on the com-

petence ratings. Again, no factor solution was specified.

Cultural self-awareness. For the *self-awareness* sub-scale, the number of factors and item

loadings matched those of the exploratory factor analysis on the Importance ratings exactly. The combination of the two factors explained 62.93% of the variance.

Awareness of client cultural identities. For the *awareness of others* sub-scale, four rather than six factors emerged as the best solution. The combination of the four factors explained 72.43% of the variance. In this case, the items consistently loaded on the same factors; however, *Importance* Factors 4 and 5 merged into *Competence* Factor 1 and *Importance* Factors 5 and 6 merged into *Competence* Factor 4. The test of internal reliability on the *Competence* ratings for the complete instrument was .94.

Working alliance. In the case of the *working alliance* sub-scale, for the most part, the loading of items on each factor was supported by the emergent 5-factor solution from the *Competence*

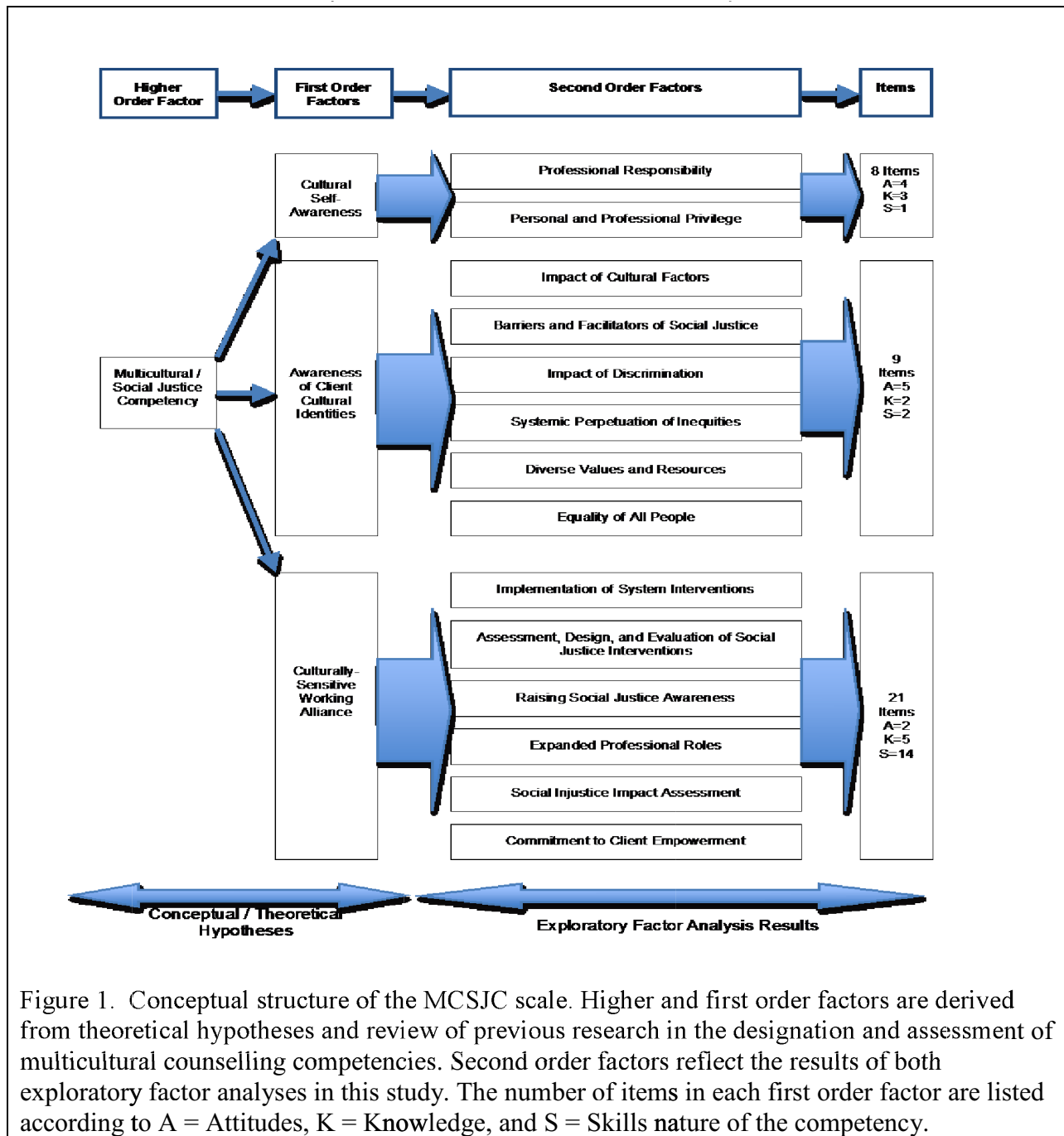


Figure 1. Conceptual structure of the MCSJC scale. Higher and first order factors are derived from theoretical hypotheses and review of previous research in the designation and assessment of multicultural counselling competencies. Second order factors reflect the results of both exploratory factor analyses in this study. The number of items in each first order factor are listed according to A = Attitudes, K = Knowledge, and S = Skills nature of the competency.

data. Of the 82 AKS items on the self-report statements on the original question bank, 43 were placed under the *Culturally-Sensitive Working Alliance* domain. Four of these were removed from the *Importance* factor analysis, because they did not load clearly on one factor over another; 3 were removed from the *Competence* factor analysis. Thirty one of the remaining 36 items loaded

on the same factors across both sets of data (86% consistency).

Forcing the *Competence* data into a 6-factor model created a less viable and interpretable solution. The extra *Importance* factor contained three items. Knowledge Q12 (*List the advantages of working collaboratively with professionals in other fields*) loaded on Factor 2, labeled *Assessment, Design, and Evaluation*

of Social Justice Interventions, for competence. Skills 3a did not meet the criteria for factor loading in the competence data set. Skills 3b (*Identify the impact of social injustices on client career development by assisting clients to explore how social inequalities have influenced their career development*) loaded on Factor 4, *Expanded Professional Roles*. We were also left with uncer-



tainty in the placement of a certain sub-items from Skills Q10. Skills Q10 a, b, and d loaded on Factor 1, *Implementation of systems interventions*, for *Importance* and Factor 3, *Raising social justice awareness*, for *Competence*. Conceptually, this item could fit in either place (*Implement interventions that target social, economic, and political systems by...*)

Revision of the MCSJC Instrument

The second exploratory factor analysis supported the majority of the factors and item loadings identified in the first factor analysis. As noted above, further research may be required to finalize the factor and item structure, particularly for the *working alliance* sub-scale. It is also possible that the qualitative difference between an assessment of perceived importance to the profession and an individual's self-assessment of personal competence account for the minor differences. At this point, the revised MCSJC instrument in Tables 1 through 3 reflects the first factor analysis structure, with questionable items in italics. It should also be noted that the response rate dropped between the attitudes, knowledge, and skills sub-scales, perhaps due to the length of the survey and the complexity of responding to both ratings for each item. As a result, the power of the statistical analyses was lower for the working alliance subscale, which had a higher weighting of skills items.

As noted earlier in the article, during the expert review

phase, a number of items were separated into stems with sub-items. The main purpose of this separation was to enable us to assess whether the sub-items clustered onto the same or different factors. So, for example, we did not want to assume that respondents would rate each of the following in similar ways:

Believe that career development practitioners have a role to play in influencing:

- a. Community development
- b. Organizational development
- c. Broader social, economic, and political systems

Table 2

MCSJC Cultural Self-Awareness Domain

	Item #	n	Factor Loading	
			1	2
Factor 1: Professional Responsibility				
Believe it is a professional responsibility to contribute to the elimination of social injustice.	A Q7	178	.723	.287
Believe that career development practitioners could do more to help eliminate discrimination.	A Q8	176	.764	.211
Believe that career development practitioners have a role to play in influencing:				
Community development	A Q12a	177	.853	.155
Organizational development	A Q12b	178	.789	.181
Broader social, economic, and political systems	A Q12c	178	.845	.241
Factor 2: Personal and Professional Privilege				
Acknowledge personal biases about work-related values.	A Q4	175	.001	.618
Explain why social justice is important to career development practice.	K Q1	147	.324	.734
Explain how belonging to particular groups can lead to certain privileges in society.	K Q2	145	.314	.738
Identify how I benefit in my career through belonging to particular groups.	K Q3	144	.241	.816
Self-assess competence to facilitate activities that promote social justice.	S Q13	113	.221	.595

Note. The loading of each item in the original MCSJC instrument onto the emergent factors from the Importance scale data is provided. The item # specifies the original organization of the items as A = Attitudes, K = Knowledge, and S = Skills, as well as the original question number. The items have been reorganized to align with the conceptual structure of the revised MCSJC instrument in Figure 1.

Based on the factor analyses, it was possible to identify which of these clusters of items loaded on the same factors and which ones loaded differently, in spite of their origins with the same item stem. The research team made the decision to sim-

plify the instrument by collapsing stems and sub-items where appropriate. This reduced the number of items in each sub-scale, with the final number of items reflected in Figure 1 above. For example, for the *Professional Responsibility* factor in the *Self-Awareness* domain, items 3 a, b, c in Table 1 are reworded in the final instrument as one item: *Believe that career development practitioners have a role to play in influencing community development, organizational development, and broader social, economic, and political systems*. Further analyses of the data

based on mean scores for each factor in the final MCSJC instrument are reported in Author1, Author2, Author4, and Author3 (2013).



Table 3

MCSJC Awareness of Client Cultural Identities Domain

	Item #	n	Factor Loading					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
Factor 1: Impact of cultural factors								
1. Explain how the following factors might impact career decision-making:								
a. Sexual orientation	K Q5a	143	.867	.210	.217	.123	.133	-.016
b. Gender	KQ5b	143	.805	.268	.249	.202	.102	.022
c. Socio-economic status	K Q5c	143	.788	.226	.331	.180	-.092	-.003
d. Ethnic background	KQ5d	143	.907	.154	.162	.127	-.013	.089
e. Age	K Q5e	143	.805	.197	.292	.130	.086	.033
f. Mental or physical ability (disability)	K Q5f	143	.708	.035	.425	.108	.225	.067
g. Religion	KQ5g	142	.736	.244	.278	.208	.029	.000
Factor 2: Barriers and facilitators of social justice								
2. Identify barriers to social justice within:								
a. Communities	S Q6a	117	.239	.833	.150	.089	.191	.124
b. Organizations	S Q6b	116	.255	.728	.121	.145	.174	.089
c. Broader social, economic, and political systems	S Q6c	117	.222	.826	.095	.097	.247	.036
3. Identify facilitators of social justice within:								
a. Communities	S Q7a	117	.129	.909	.171	.174	-.035	.007
b. Organizations	S Q7b	116	.142	.870	.130	.237	-.053	-.021
c. Broader social, economic, and political systems	S Q7c	116	.129	.884	.185	.229	.010	-.046
Factor 3: Impact of discrimination								
4. Recognize the impact of discrimination on career development based on:								
a. Sexual orientation	A Q6a	178	.385	.144	.719	-.048	.175	-.086
b. Gender	A Q6b	178	.221	.178	.831	.091	.112	.112
c. Socio-economic status	A Q6c	178	.148	.263	.817	.131	-.055	.152
d. Ethnic background	A Q6d	178	.239	.067	.831	.176	.132	.036
e. Age	A Q6e	175	.279	.157	.771	.199	-.099	.075
f. Mental or physical ability (disability)	A Q6f	177	.276	.022	.775	.117	.262	.059
g. Religion	A Q6g	176	.368	.351	.581	.047	.042	-.162
Factor 4: Systemic perpetuation of inequities								
5. Describe how inequities among social groups are perpetuated within:								
a. Communities	K Q4a	143	.367	.392	.204	.743	.122	.027
b. Organizations	K Q4b	143	.319	.384	.251	.779	.096	.085
c. Broader social, economic, and political systems	K Q4c	141	.281	.387	.173	.804	.133	.050
Factor 5: Diverse values and resources								
6. Respect client points of view about the role of work in their lives								
Q A3	179	.092	.092	.104	.049	.876	.076	
7. Acknowledge that certain members of society have less access than others to career-related resources								
Q A5	177	.093	.316	.271	.244	.566	.123	
Factor 6: Equality of all people								
8. Believe in the equal worth of all people								
Q A1	178	.129	.139	.071	-.015	-.013	.830	
9. Believe in the equal rights of all people								
Q A2	180	-.066	-.045	.048	.085	.157	.772	

Note. The loading of each item in the original MCSJC instrument onto the emergent factors from the Importance scale data is provided. The item # specifies the original organization of the items as A = Attitudes, K = Knowledge, and S = Skills, as well as the original question number. The items have been reorganized to align with the conceptual structure of the revised MCSJC instrument Figure 1.

Reliability and Validity

The Cronbach’s Alpha scores for both sets of data indicated strong internal reliability, higher than most of the instruments reviewed. The content validity of the MCSJC was strengthened by comparison of the items to other competency frameworks and instruments in the development of the original taxonomy and by the review of item appropriateness, goodness of fit, and clarity by the expert reviewers (Constantine et al.,

2002). Construct validity was supported through the amount of variance accounted for in both exploratory factor analyses (Constantine et al., 2002; Hays, 2008). In this study, the percent of variance accounted for by the factors in each of the a priori sub-scales was higher than the values reported in any of the previous studies noted earlier.

The purpose of this article is not to interpret the data related to importance and competence ratings of career counsellors. As noted above, these findings are reported elsewhere (Author1 et

al., 2012). However, in keeping with other studies, participants’ self-reported competence was significantly higher on many of the factors based on both years of experience and familiarity with social justice. This observation supports the criterion-related validity of the instrument (Constantine et al., 2002; Hays, 2008).

Implications and Conclusions

The conceptual/theoretical arguments underlying the three core competency domains in the CIC model have been previously substantiated (Author1 & Author2, 2010a, 2010b). Although this study did not test the tri-partite factor structure of the instrument, the factor analysis of the three a priori sub-scales provided meaningful and empirically supported second order factors that potentially contribute to our understanding of multicultural and social justice competence, specifically for career development practitioners. A confirmatory factor analysis using either the importance or competence scale, or both, with larger samples would provide an opportunity for further validation of both the three-factor structure (first order factors) and specific competencies (second order factors).

There are a number of limitations to this study, which affect its generalizability and leave questions to be answered in future research. The MCSJC instrument was designed specifically for and tested with career development practitioners. This affected the inclusion/exclusion and the wording of some items. It will also be important to test



Table 4

MCSJC Culturally-Sensitive Working Alliance Domain

	Item #	n	Factor Loading						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
Factor 1: Implementation of systemic interventions									
1. Employ the professional role: Advocates with those in positions of power									
	S Q1f	117	.527	.146	.297	.349	.087	-.020	
2. Implement interventions that target communities by:									
a.	Developing effective networks for consultation within client communities	S Q8a	116	.765	.086	.146	.242	.332	.070
b.	Collaborating with community members to conduct needs assessment	S Q8b	116	.805	.074	.073	.189	.356	-.006
c.	Facilitating collaboration to identify community goals	S Q8c	115	.828	.165	.153	.183	.324	.036
d.	Facilitating collaboration to identify potential intervention strategies	S Q8d	115	.829	.146	.140	.188	.281	.054
e.	Empowering communities to facilitate change in external factors affecting career development	S Q8e	113	.843	.147	.187	.179	.176	.033
3. Implement interventions that target organizations by:									
a.	Facilitating strategic planning within organizations	S Q9a	116	.828	.276	.202	.038	.124	.060
b.	Assisting organizations in clarifying their vision	S Q9b	116	.835	.258	.215	.028	.073	.123
c.	Assisting organizations in increasing responsiveness of service to members of non-dominant populations	S Q9c	116	.857	.300	.106	.098	-.010	.022
d.	Facilitating change in organizational policies	S Q9d	116	.867	.278	.160	.084	.037	.072
4. Implement interventions that target social, economic, and political systems by:									
a.	Building effective relationships with individuals or groups who hold power over resources or opportunities	S Q10a	115	.607	.190	.304	.449	-.009	.101
b.	Building effective, collaborative inter-professional teams to address systemic social justice issues	S Q10b	115	.706	.171	.358	.355	-.171	.048
c.	Mediating among diverse positions	S Q10c	114	.681	.249	.369	.141	-.178	.036
d.	Lobbying for changes in legislation	S Q10d	114	.604	.359	.529	.162	-.142	-.094
Factor 2: Assessment, design, and evaluation of social justice interventions									
5. Describe types of interventions that may be used to promote social justice									
	K Q8	143	.036	.542	.369	.363	.250	.188	
6. Describe potential ethical dilemmas involved in:									
a.	Supporting clients to influence the external factors that affect their career development	K Q9a	143	.086	.678	.139	.408	.213	-.097
b.	Working collaboratively with clients to promote social justice (e.g., dual relationships)	K Q9b	142	.284	.750	-.032	.328	.084	-.093
c.	Intervening directly to facilitate change in these external factors	K Q9c	143	.200	.707	.321	.182	-.040	-.024
7. Describe how to facilitate change in:									
a.	Communities	K Q10a	141	.381	.709	.197	.108	.169	.215
b.	Organizations	K 10b	143	.368	.719	.182	.132	.145	.269
c.	Broader social, economic, and political systems	K Q10c	143	.388	.715	.275	.159	.134	.207
	K Q11	141	.224	.683	.293	.112	.408	.037	
8. Identify characteristics of a workplace collaboratively with professionals in other fields									
	S Q3c	116	.296	.470	.117	.306	.333	.049	
9. Identify the impact of social injustices on client career development by: Assessing the potential for clients to change external factors affecting career development									
Factor 3: Raising social justice awareness									
10. Employ the professional role: Mobilize media to promote awareness of social injustices									
	S Q1g	116	.425	.323	.539	.258	.047	-.118	
11. Conduct evaluations to demonstrate the efficacy of social justice interventions in career development practice									
	S Q11	115	.340	.275	.692	.055	.171	.183	
12. Engage in research to highlight social justice issues									
	S Q12	114	.437	.362	.656	.010	.271	-.013	
13. Encourage other career development practitioners to examine social justice issues									
	S Q14	112	.259	.256	.728	.244	.313	.01	
14. Encourage professional organizations to advocate for social justice									
	S Q15	111	.402	.122	.655	.359	.067	.063	
Factor 4: Expanded professional roles									
15. Employ the following professional roles:									
a.	Prevention of career development problems	S Q1a	117	.009	.122	.117	.679	.047	.219
b.	Facilitate educational activities related to social justice	S Q1b	117	.419	.292	.373	.558	.250	-.108
c.	Engage in consciousness-raising with regard to social justice issues	S Q1c	116	.461	.334	.333	.569	.130	-.055
d.	Consult with organizations related to social justice	S Q1d	116	.449	.103	.278	.586	.275	-.085
16. Identify individual client strengths (e.g., support systems, coping strategies) that help them cope with the effects of oppression									
	S Q4	117	.411	.178	-.085	.496	.350	.231	
17. Empower clients to influence external factors affecting career development									
	S Q5	117	.191	.436	.093	.603	.026	.065	
Factor 5: Social injustice impact assessment									
18. List the advantages of working collaboratively with professionals in other fields									
	K Q12	142	.105	.338	.212	.053	.628	.151	
19. Identify the impact of social injustices on client career development by:									
a.	Selecting culturally appropriate assessment processes to determine the impact of social injustices	S Q3a	114	.322	.211	.261	.311	.569	.012
b.	Assisting clients to explore how social inequalities have influenced their career development	S Q3b	114	.317	.294	.095	.396	.549	.102
Factor 6: Commitment to client empowerment									
20. Respect the rights of clients to draw on their own cultural practices to make choices about their careers									
	A Q10	178	.115	.094	-.014	.173	.004	.795	
21. Commit to empowering clients to influence environments that negatively affect them									
	A Q11	176	.003	.148	.077	.052	.144	.807	

Note. The loading of each item in the original MCSJC instrument onto the emergent factors from the Importance scale data is provided. The item # specifies the original organization of the items as A = Attitudes, K = Knowledge, and S = Skills, as well as the original question number. The items have been reorganized to align with the conceptual structure of the revised MCSJC instrument in Figure 1.

the MCSJC with greater numbers of career development practitioners and in different countries. The data drawn on for the two factor analyses applied different lenses to the same items: importance to the profession and personal competence. It is also possible that combining these on the same questionnaire skewed the responses on the competence measure. Unlike some of the earlier studies, there was no measure of social desirability included, and it could be argued that practitioners may be disinclined to rate themselves poorly on a multicultural and social justice competency assessment (Sodowsky et al., 1994; Gamst et al., 2004), particularly if they have just stated that an item is important to the profession. However, Author1, Author2, Author4, and Author3 (2013), in their analysis of the data from these two scales, note significant differences in the gaps between importance and competency ratings across various factors, suggesting that even with the importance scale, differential relative self-ratings of competency were assessed. All self-report instruments have questionable accuracy as measure of competence, in contrast to behavioural measures (Constantine et al., 2002). Ultimately, we hope that when career development practitioners claim that competencies related to social justice are important, they will also be able to identify and act on areas for further learning and implementation. The ratio of respondents to items in this study also limited the scope of the factor analysis, resulting in selection of the three a-priori domains for



three independent factor analyses. This made it impossible to assess the overall factor structure of the instrument or to fully support, apart from the theoretical arguments made in this paper, the self-awareness, awareness of others cultural identities, and culturally sensitive working alliance model.

The benefit of including the Importance measure in this study is that it provided career practitioners with a direct opportunity to identify the elements that they believed were essential to career development and to position multicultural and social justice principles and practices in the context of their own practice experiences. The resultant MCSJC instrument serves not only as a potential tool for practitioner self-assessment, but also as a potential guide for and assessment measure in the design and delivery of career counselling and career development pre-service and continuing education curricula. We have provided a detailed description of the instrument development process in hopes that it might be helpful for future researchers who wish to test and/or refine this instrument or develop a new one.

To conclude the discussion, we return to comments of the expert reviewers and a number of key statements about the significance of this study, particularly to the field of career development: *This whole survey puts career development at a higher level... I think this is an important area and I know we do not deal with social justice issues in any comprehensive way in training career professionals... I be-*

lieve this is valuable research and that the findings will greatly contribute to the field. However, I think the most important outcome will be to raise the awareness of career practitioners about their role in promoting and enacting social justice strategies. It is our hope that through engaging career development practitioners to consider the importance of the competencies for career practice and providing self-ratings of competence will have moved participants along this consciousness-raising path and positioned social justice a bit closer to the forefront of professional education and practice.

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Restoring Hope: Responding to Career Concerns of Immigrant Clients

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Abstract

Immigrants, whose career path is often different from the one described in traditional career theory, compose a large portion of the work force. As a result, a modified career theory and career counseling strategies that respond to this population's specific circumstances are needed. In this paper, issues in immigrant career transition are described, including barriers that interfere with the transition process and factors that contribute to its success. Immigrants face many intra-individual, relational, and contextual level barriers along with challenges of cultural adaptation. Successful transition relies on factors within the individual, such as adaptability and hardiness, and also on relational and systemic supports, such as family, language programs, and government sponsored organizations. Suggestions for counselling practice are offered, derived from a multi-leveled interactive conceptual framework. Interventions tailored to address individual, relational and contextual levels are presented, with an emphasis on social justice interventions that are seldom discussed in psychological literature. The author presents a part of her own experience to illustrate the issues.

I arrived at the Winnipeg International Airport in the sum-

mer of 1996, welcomed by the smiling faces of my husband and a few close friends. It felt good to reunite, and we were happy that the bureaucratic procedure that included extensive paperwork, medical exams, and a long wait was finally over. Prior to migration, I graduated from the University of Belgrade and worked for several years as a psychologist in a hospital. I made a decision to migrate in order to join my husband who had left the country due to circumstances of war. According to professional and administrative definitions, I was a voluntary migrant who had met the requirements of education and language proficiency outlined in the Canadian immigration guidelines. At the time this decision was made, my country was falling apart under the pressures of war that had brought upon us economic sanctions and consequent poverty. As a young adult, I was not only facing insecurities of my country's economic collapse, but was also dealing with adversities of war and isolation, including separation from my husband and his forced migration to North America.

Like many professionals trained in other countries, I lost the rights to practice as a psychologist in Canada and embarked on a long path towards re-establishing career that I perceived to be a crucial part of my identity. After a few jobs taken in order to survive, a degree and

career in Marriage and Family Therapy, and a couple of children, I am currently completing PhD studies in counseling psychology. Now in my forties, I can finally see a possibility of practicing in my chosen field again. This prospect is exciting and scary, as I have struggled between letting go and holding onto my identity as a psychologist in the past sixteen years.

A number of privileges along this path enabled me to arrive at this point, privileges that many immigrants are not so fortunate to have. This included white skin, physical ability, education, English proficiency, belief in my capacity to succeed, economically self-reliant community left behind, familiarity with European cultures and traditions, and strong support of my husband. Without these privileges, my current education would likely have not been an option.

The notion of migration is frequently romanticized and associated with images of a better life, safety, and increased access to economic and occupational resources. In the hope of a better future for their families and themselves, immigrants leave homelands and arrive at new landscapes where they have to build lives, establish careers, and find ways to adapt. After an initial sense of relief, many immigrants find themselves struggling with a difficult transition in which vocational obstacles fre-



quently serve as a major source of stress (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008; Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008). Challenges often include unemployment, underemployment, loss of previously held professional credentials, and professional status, change from professional to service and manual labour, extended work hours, and lengthy periods of time away from families (Pope, Cheng, & Leong, 1998; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008; Yeh, Kim, Pituc & Atkins, 2008; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Research indicates that over one half of the recent Canadian immigrants does not work in their specialized professional field after immigration, despite being highly qualified. They earn less, are more likely unemployed and underemployed, and have a limited perspective for career advancement (Chen, 2008).

Immigrant career path is often different from that of persons who grew up exposed to career discourses typically described in traditional career theories (Holland, 1997; Super, 1957). Career counselling with immigrant clients requires understanding of this population's unique and complex circumstances, and a set of practical tools specifically tailored to address issues of immigrant career development. Unfortunately, psychological knowledge regarding career experiences of immigrants is relatively sparse. In their review of four major professional career related journals, Flores, Hsieh and Chiao (2011) found that only 0.01% of all articles

published in a recent twenty year period address immigrants' career development. This is surprising, considering that numbers of immigrants have been steadily increasing in North America in the past few decades.

The purpose of this paper is to outline issues that the immigrant population faces in their process of career transitioning and to offer practical suggestions for career counsellors working with immigrant clients. Labels, such as immigrants, can be harmful and it is necessary to clearly define this term. While acknowledging her own ambivalence about the term immigrant, the author maintained this terminology for the sake of consistency with existing literature. Immigrants are considered to be voluntary migrants whose decision to move is mainly motivated by economic, social, and familial factors, and are generally able to return to their countries of origin if they choose to (Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008; Yost, 2002).

The Experience of Career Transition in Immigrants

In spite of the significant relationship between unemployment/underemployment and health, largely established in the general population, little is known about the impact of career transition on immigrant health and well being (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Psychological literature has yet to provide information about the role employment below the level of one's educational preparation and additional challenges of adaption to a new coun-

try play in career transition of immigrants. Career can be a significant source of empowerment in the new country through creating opportunities to learn about the culture and language (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008), providing a sense of meaning, decreasing social isolation, and defining status and identity (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Ishiyama, 1995). Aycan and Berry (1996) found that duration of unemployment and current employment status have critical implications for well-being and adaptation of immigrants. The decline in employment status and difficulty regaining or achieving upward mobility have been found to increase acculturation stress, resulting in negative self-concept, alienation from the society, and adaptation difficulties (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Other scholars suggest that unemployment, economic hardship, and job demands constitute major factors contributing to depression, anxiety, and mental illness in the immigrant population (Ishiyama, 1995; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008). These factors not only affect individual migrants, but also have a significant impact on their relationships and family dynamics, causing intergenerational conflict and transforming family roles (Pope, Cheng & Leong, 1998; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Asanin Dean & Wilson (2009) identify three main pathways through which employment/underemployment affects mental health of immigrants. First, lack



of income is particularly important for those in the position of supporting their families. Second, immigrants experience de-skilling, or a loss of skills previously acquired through education and work, due to their inability to continue in their chosen career. Third, identities tied to one's role of a breadwinner, a professional, or a person employed in the society are lost, which results in a significant degradation of social status.

Most of the existing literature on immigrant career transition focuses on barriers that immigrants face in their attempt to establish a career in the host country and on associated challenges. Consistent with contemporary career theory that suggests a view of career as inseparable from general life and personal concerns (Krumboltz, 1993; Pope, Cheng & Leong, 1998; Savickas, 2009; Super, 1993), immigrant career transition is often described in the context of a larger adaptation process.

Barriers Affecting Immigrant Career Transition

After a long wait and separation from my husband, I was happy to sign any documents at the Canadian Embassy that would allow us to move on with our lives. I was warned that I might not be able to practice as a psychologist in Canada, but career was not my primary concern at the time. I was in my late twenties, and my plan was to re-train in order to eventually re-claim my professional identity. As a young couple without children, having a considerable level of

education and being relatively proficient in English, we were equipped with privileges that would allow us to complete the required training and re-claim occupational rights. We did not have an obligation to support children, although for several years during the war we sent money to our family members who stayed behind. As I attempted to enroll as a graduate psychology student, I learned about financial pressures, GRE requirements, and the need to study materials very similar to what I had already learned back home. The cost of the application for multiple training sites, and tuition for years of graduate training in psychology were way above what was affordable. As new immigrants, we could not move to another Canadian city or to the US to study. The GRE test that was designed for native English speakers seemed impossible to pass. My path to becoming a graduate student in my chosen field was engulfed by insurmountable financial and systemic obstacles. This experience was devastating, as my options for re-claiming this significant part of my identity seemed very limited. The future of my career appeared bleak.

Many barriers that delay immigrant integration into the work force and significantly affect career transition have been identified. Research demonstrates that educational and career barriers that are encountered become internalized into immigrants' belief system consequently limiting career aspirations (Jackson, Kacanski, Rust & Beck, 2006). Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson,

Ngaruiya & Gonzalez (2008) classify barriers into individual, group, and contextual. Group and contextual level barriers significantly overlap and will be considered together. In addition, the author believes that it is important to consider the influence of significant relationships in immigrant career transition.

Intra-individual barriers. Barriers in immigrant career transition, most commonly described in psychological literature, could be classified as individual level barriers. This includes language proficiency issues (Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan & Cheng, 2011; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Ishiyama, 1989; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yost & Lucas, 2002;), individual differences in cultural adjustment (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Aycan & Berry, 1996), unrealistic expectations prior to migration (Lee & Westwood, 1996), and lack of job finding techniques (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991). Other intra-individual barriers that have been described are lack of knowledge regarding the labour market and the community, no clear and feasible career goals, lack of awareness of services (Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan & Cheng, 2011), difficulty in self-validation (Ishiyama, 1995), skills, education, emotional and cognitive challenges (Koert, Borgen & Amundson, 2011). Personal characteristics such as age, gender, and marital status can also enable or slow down immigrant career transition (Yost & Lucas, 2002). Intra-individual focus, typical within the psychological discipline, offers



strategies for improving immigrant career transition through removal of intrapersonal obstacles and through increased adjustment to the new culture. These strategies mostly focus on learning new skills and on developing a level of flexibility necessary for career adjustment, often involving a career change. For example, career counsellors can help clients look for ways to strengthen language skills, retrain (Lee & Westwood, 1996), develop efficient self-validation strategies (Ishiyama, 1995), rehearse mock job interviews (Ma & Yeh, 2010), and enhance personal skills such as hardiness (Koert, Borgen & Amundson, 2011). Limited findings indicate that there is an increase in status and earnings over time, as a result of language skill development and expanded familiarity with cultural and business related practices (Aycañ & Berry, 1996).

Although it offers helpful tools to career counsellors, a pure intra-individual approach may not be sufficient for understanding the career transition experience of immigrant clients. Career transition does not happen in isolation, and is embedded in a larger network of relationships, society, and culture that enables or thwarts individual attempts. Hartung and Blustein (2002) suggest that a career decision making model should incorporate differences not only in individual decision making styles, but also in one's access to social and economic opportunities. In spite of being aware of the fact that they need to improve their language skills or retrain, many immigrants are limited in their efforts

by realities of our capitalist society. Long working hours, time away from the family, and low paying jobs become obstacles to language or educational advancement (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008). Due to financial pressures of supporting families in the new country and the ones left behind, many immigrants are unable to take language classes (Flores et al., 2011; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Re-training is not an option for many immigrant professionals, due to systemic obstacles that are outside the boundaries of their power. According to Bauder (2003), immigrant labour has been systematically devalued through regulatory institutions' active exclusion of immigrants from the upper segments of the labour market. As professional associations, regulatory bodies, and employers give preference to native born and educated workers, access to the most highly desired occupations is systematically denied to immigrants, resulting in eventual loss of skill, or de-skilling. Migrants whose foreign education and credentials are not recognized in the host country are often limited in access to employment due to the differential assessment of their credentials and work experience (Bauder, 2003). For many such migrants, the path towards re-establishing the original career and related occupational and social status is very long and extremely difficult (Chen, 2008).

Relationship, group, and context level barriers. Unpredictable contextual factors, which

have a significant impact on the immigrants' transition, negate the concept of linear individual career development, implied in traditional career theory (Holland, 1997; Supper, 1980). According to Stableton (2007), contextual factors are "any events or circumstances that have an impact on an individual's life-career" (p. 293). Circumstances such as fleeing one's country of origin, political oppression, history, labour laws, natural disasters, violence and poverty are examples of such contextual factors. The author argues that our understanding of career development needs to take into account the role of family, community, history, socio-cultural, and political circumstances influencing one's career (Stableton, 2007).

The contextual lens has been widely acknowledged in contemporary career theory that calls attention to variables extending far beyond the individual experience (Blustein, Palladino, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Pryor & Bright 2009; Richardson, in press; Young, Valach & Collin, 2002). Although these contemporary theorists significantly differ in their approach to career, most modern conceptualizations of career development call attention to trends of globalization, and the changing nature of labour market and work contexts. Modern social trends, which affect career development of all society members, are especially salient for immigrants who, by definition, change life and work contexts through migration.

The effect of relational variables on career development



has been demonstrated in literature on social support. Relational support from family and others are critical factors in promoting academic success and career aspiration of immigrant youth (Jackson, Kacanski, Rust & Back, 2006). Government sponsored support systems and community resources have been identified as helpful factors in immigrant career success (Koert, Borgen & Amundson, 2011), while absence of such supports can be major impeding factors in immigrant career transition.

Group and contextual barriers that have been described in the literature include cultural values, immigration status, experiences of oppression and discrimination (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008), strain on family roles, separation from the family left behind, and loss of support networks (Flores et al., 2011). Aycan and Berry (1996) identify four major barriers that delay integration of immigrants into the work force in Canada. These barriers include lack of recognition of occupational accreditation and education; the requirement for foreign trained candidates to take occupation specific tests that are very demanding, expensive, culturally biased and unfairly administered; inadequate language training; and "Canadian work experience".

Chen (2008) argues that unfamiliarity with the new culture is one of the major challenges in immigrant life-career transition. In addition to job-specific skills, immigrants often experience issues in cross-cultural adjustment, culture shock, and

unfamiliarity with cultural norms resulting in a need to negotiate cultures. It has been demonstrated that the impact of these challenges lessens with cultural immersion and expanded experience (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Chen, 2008).

Other systemic barriers, however, are much more difficult to overcome. Requirements of Canadian credentials and "Canadian experience" place newcomers in a no-win position, systematically devaluing knowledge, experience, and human and cultural capital that immigrants bring to their new country (Bauder, 2003; Chen, 2008). "In most cases, foreign-earned credentials and qualifications become invalid in Canada, leading to a total loss of previous professional status and/or a re-qualification process that requires a huge amount of time, energy, and money" (Chen, 2008, p. 430). In addition, newcomers are often misinformed that their professional credentials will be valued in the host country (Neault, 2005). Recognition of professional qualifications is a jurisdiction of regulatory professional bodies, such as colleges of physicians, teachers, psychologists, and engineers, which require Canadian-earned education and work experience that most immigrants do not possess. Immigrants can gain "Canadian experience" through accepting labour below one's level of educational preparation and work experience. As their expertise acquired in the country of origin eventually diminishes, accepting such jobs leads to de-skilling and loss of cultural and human capital both

in the country of origin and in the receiving country (Bauder, 2003). According to Asanin Dean & Wilson (2007), fifty five percent of skilled immigrants in Ontario who are able to find work within the first six months in the country do so outside of their field of expertise, mostly accepting part time jobs. The phenomenon of de-skilling exacerbates health problems not only for the individual migrants but also for their families (Asanin Dean & Wilson, 2007).

Another source of systemic barriers is related to the host culture's attitudes towards immigrants and related oppressive practices. Immigrants can be seen as competitors in the labour market, as intruders in one's territory, or as difficult to interact with (Lee & Westwood, 1996). Yakushko, Watson & Thompson (2008) suggest that oppression, rooted in racism, sexism, xenophobia, and poverty, is one of the major sources of stress faced by immigrants. According to Ishiyama (1995), immigrants often face invalidating experiences related to loss of identity, role, sense of competence, and status while lacking validating community. As they leave behind large parts of community that used to act as a powerful buffer in stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the need for a validating community becomes even more prominent.

The current state of the labour market, characterized by unpredictable workforce opportunities and lower earning potential, is a significant contextual factor that immigrants are faced with (Koert, Borgen & Amund-



son, 2011). In today's unstable economy, immigrants have a difficult time securing employment and also face severe discrimination.

Barriers stemming from challenges of cultural adaptation.

In the first year after immigration, I found myself mourning numerous losses – loss of familiar language, scenery and smells, loss of occupation and status, loss of cultural and family rituals, and, most of all, loss of the relationship network that used to provide support and envelop my experience with meaning. A sudden shift to becoming a minority group member, a person with a foreign accent, and a professional whose education and experience were not recognized resulted in feelings of powerlessness. Our priority was to survive economically and psychologically, so my husband and I secured employment below the level of our education that paid a minimum wage. Some job searching strategies seemed strange, as marketing one's skills and emphasizing one's accomplishments were contrary to humility that was valued in our culture. We had to learn much in respect to the job market, educational system, and re-training opportunities. In addition to separation from family and friends who stayed behind, realization that we might not be able to re-claim our previous occupations was very painful. Even though we were willing to "re-train" and believed we had the capacity to do so, obstacles to receiving education in the new country further contributed to a sense of loss,

powerlessness, and anxiety about our future.

As the notion of career is inseparable from general life and personal concerns (Krumboltz, 1993; Super, 1993; Savickas et al., 2009), career transition experience of immigrants needs to be viewed in the context of their experience adapting in the new country. According to Chen (2008), "many immigrants gradually gain a real sense of settling down only after they have rebuilt their vocational life" (p. 428). The quality of transitional experience in other aspects of personal and social lives significantly depends on the quality of career transition (Chen, 2008).

Migration related phenomena that are considered to be significant obstacles to career adjustment are culture shock (Chen, 2008; Yost & Lucas, 2002), acculturation stress (Berry, 1997), immigration stress (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008; Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008), and cultural dislocation (Ishiyama, 1995). Culture shock is defined as anxiety caused from contact with a new and unknown culture, resulting in feelings of confusion, loss, and powerlessness that follow the loss of familiar cultural cues and social norms (Oberg, 1960). Concepts of acculturation stress and immigration stress draw attention to pressures imposed on internal resources in coping with the new environment. Cultural dislocation is a subjective experience of feeling displaced in a given socio-cultural environment, stemming from a lack of validation of self, feelings of cultural uprootedness,

and conflict regarding cultural differences (Ishiyama, 1995).

Another concept commonly used in the literature is acculturation, a set of phenomena that result when a person from a certain culture comes into continuous first-hand contact with another culture, including subsequent changes in the original culture patterns (Berry, 1997). Similarly to other above described concepts, the concept of acculturation often implies a unidirectional nature of change resulting from cultural interaction and can be problematic as such. It is implied that an acculturated individual is the one who has made changes necessary to fit into the dominant culture's system even if this is done at a detriment to her/his own well being. An immigrant employed below her/his level of preparation, in order to support her/his family, could be seen as acculturated regardless of the impact her/his occupational situation has on her/his health and career. In this context, the concept of acculturation can further reinforce circumstances that unjustly disempower an immigrant population.

In understanding immigrant career transition experience, it is important to consider pre-migration, migration, and post-migration sources of stress and validation (Mock, 1998). Pre-migration circumstances may include involuntary migration, (un)available support, expectations, losses, reversibility of the move, experiences of threat, and pre-migration trauma. Migration and post-migration stressors may include stress of relocation, immigration status, acculturation



stress, relational stress, loss of social status and social contact, and oppression (Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008). It is important to note that the relationship between adaptational stressors and career transition process is bi-directional. While adaptation stressors may interfere with career transition, successful career transition aids cultural adaptation in the new country (Chen, 2008).

Bhatia and Ram (2009) argue for a fluid and politicized understanding of immigrant identity, calling for a shift from conceptualizing acculturation and immigrant identity as an individual process to a broader contextual and political phenomenon. According to these authors, identity should not be defined in terms of fixed absolute essences but rather as a creation of cultural discourses, history, and power. Cultural identity is about “positioning” – it is situated in historical context, bound up in a set of political positions and entails negotiation, dislocation and conflict (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). In conceptualizing issues that immigrants face in the process of cultural interchange, the field of career counselling needs a bi-directional understanding of this process. Considering that both immigrants and their new context change as a result of the intercultural exchange, it would be helpful to examine how the new environment can provide optimal conditions for adaptation. In addition to helping clients adjust to their new cultures, counsellors can advocate for changes in the new culture that will result in optimal benefits for both the new-

comers and the new country. By not doing so, counsellors risk helping clients adjust to unjust situations, which may be the source of the clients’ problems in the first place (Waldegrave, 2005).

Success Stories: Helpful Factors in Immigrant Career Transition

I consider mine to be a success story, replete with obstacles, persistent effort, belief in my capacity to be a psychologist, and with plenty of support along the way. This was not a straightforward path. I have made a “detour”, acquiring a Master’s Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, in a program where my skills were recognized and my contributions were valued. I was lucky to come across mentors and colleagues who saw my potential and supported my pursuit in becoming established in the field of family therapy. I was also fortunate to have a very supportive partner who stood by me during a long adaptation period. With new confidence, experience, and excellent references, I found the courage to apply to a PhD program in counselling psychology and was accepted. Once again, I found myself fortunate to have my potential recognized by my new PhD program. Fourteen years after immigration, I was on my way to reclaiming my long lost professional identity. In my ten-year career as a family therapist, I have had the honour of witnessing many similar stories and was amazed by resourcefulness and resilience of many successful immigrant clients.

Although it is important to name and describe barriers that stand in the way of immigrant career transition, viewing this group only through the lens of challenge further contributes to stereotyping and discrimination. In spite of obstacles, many immigrants are successful in accomplishing life and career goals. With the focus on deficit in the psychological literature, strengths, resilience, and community networks are often disregarded (Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008), and factors that contribute to successful adaptation are neglected in research. A small body of recently emerging literature has shed light on successful cultural and career adaptation in immigrants. In a study examining factors that helped and hindered successful coping with work related challenges of immigrant women, Koert, Borgen and Amundson (2001) identified a range of helpful internal and external factors. Internal factors described by successful immigrant women were beliefs, traits, values, inner strength, resilience, active search for skills and resources, and self-care. The external factors included relationships and support from family, friends, community, religious groups, government and community resources, and characteristics of the work environment such as positive interaction, training, orientation, flexibility, and team-work (Koert, Borgen & Amundson, 2011). Another study of the transition experience of successful Chinese immigrants indicated four major success factors: 1. Having a positive attitude and personality; 2. Skills and re-



source development; 3. Education and work experience background; and 4. Community and family support (Amundson, Yeung, Cun, Chen & Cheng, 2011). In a study on academic success and career aspirations of immigrant youth, Jackson, Kancanski, Rust & Back (2006) found that contextual supports, particularly relational support from family and others were critical factors in promoting academic success and career aspiration.

Even though the studies described above may be limited as they reflect values of the cultures of their participants, they consistently demonstrate that immigrant career transition needs to be approached from a multi-leveled and holistic perspective. In addition to attitude, personality, skills, and resiliency, factors such as relationships, government sponsored support systems, and community resources have also been identified as helpful in successful career transition. This research indicates importance of internal, relational, and contextual factors in successful career transition.

Suggestions for Counselling Practice

Based on the issues identified in career transition, career counselling can be tailored to address challenges and support immigrant efforts towards their chosen career goals.

Goals of Career Counselling with Immigrants

The goals of career coun-

selling with the immigrant population can be conceptualized as: 1. Helping clients cope with loss, ambiguity, and unjust socio-political situations; 2. Establishing and/or strengthening factors helpful in a successful career transition; and 3. Removing contextual barriers that hinder successful career transition. Various types of strategies can be used to work towards these goals. To help clients cope with loss, ambiguity, and unjust situations, strategies such as listening, acknowledging, naming, raising consciousness, and collaboration in challenging unjust situations can be used. Focusing on factors helpful in career transition, counsellors can use interventions aimed at fostering resiliency or hardiness. To remove the contextual barriers, strategies of advocating, education, and research can be used.

To accomplish these goals, career counsellors need to obtain a thorough understanding of this population's concerns, pay attention to how their own experiences and cultural heritage shape this understanding, remain a high degree of openness, and use appropriate interventions.

Establishing a More Complex Picture

The experience of career transition in immigrants is influenced by a number of factors functioning on intrapersonal, relational, and contextual levels. This is a multidirectional process and affects not only the individual in transition, but also relationships, groups, and systems that she/he is a part of. A deeper understanding of the career transi-

tion process of this population needs to be rooted in an integrative approach that takes into consideration intrapersonal, relational, and larger contextual levels. In the context of career theory, this means going beyond integration of personal and career issues (Krumboltz, 1993; Super, 1993), in order to intervene on the level of relationships and contexts that individuals are embedded in (Blustein, 2001; Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005). It also requires abandoning the unidirectional model of career and cultural adaptation, and replacing it with a dynamic interactional model. The following diagram illustrates a model for understanding career transition of immigrants that is both contextual and interactional. This integrative conceptual framework draws from the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), applications of which have been recommended in counselling of immigrant populations (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005), and from the systems theory of career counselling described by McMahan and Patton (2006).

As illustrated in Figure 1., career is embedded in a larger context of personality and individual's life, a network of relationships, and a larger cultural-socio-political context. Changes and events on each level affect all other levels and may aid or hinder career transition.

The individual level contains information regarding personal and career aspirations, experience of career transition, educational and professional accomplishments pre migration,

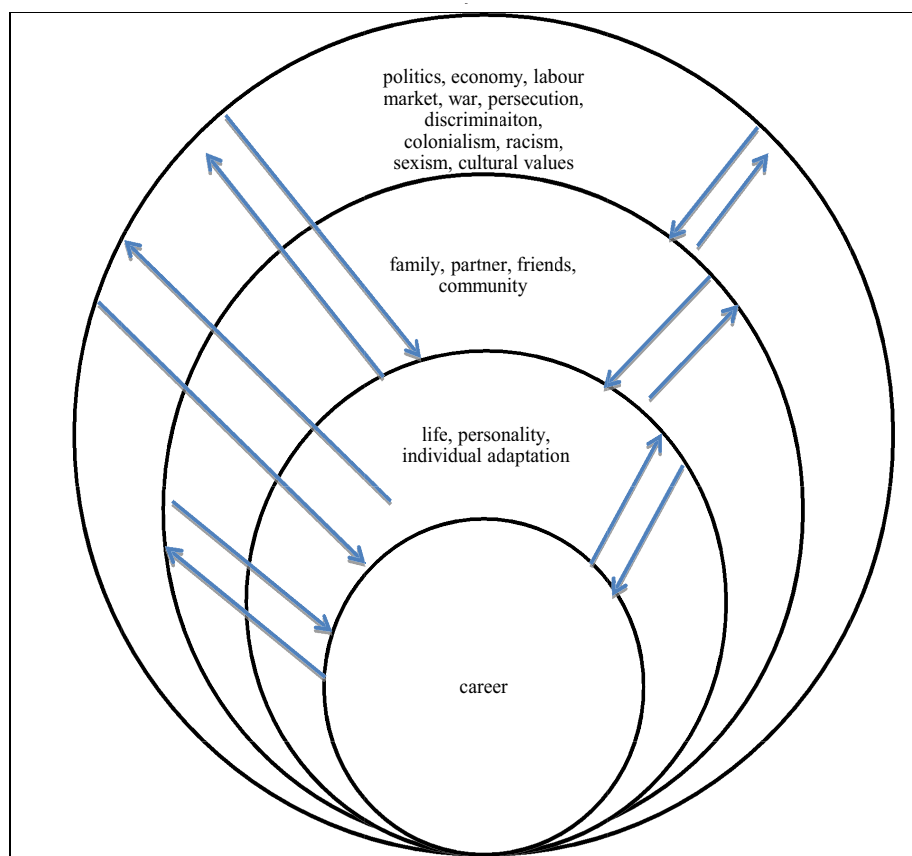


Figure 1. Integrative Interactional Model of Career Transition

(in)validation of career related achievements in the new country, and feelings of loss and grief. Career related exploration needs to be placed in the context of the person's life experiences, struggles, goals, and dreams. This might mean exploring the meaning of career in the client's individual and cultural environments, examining how it relates to a sense of identity, and where it fits in the larger context of one's past, present, and future.

The relational level involves changes in family and community functioning related to migration and career transition. Consideration of this level may include family loyalty, interpersonal connections, those left behind, those that the client feels obligated to support, those who offer support to the client, and other relational concerns. Estab-

lishing new relationships and strengthening one's community of support may be a crucial part of the career transition process.

The contextual level contains predictable and unpredictable factors (Pryor & Bright, 2009), including career related cultural norms and values, social identity, ethnic and other communities, school system, government, helping agencies, medical, and school system. It is characterized by culturally defined constructs such as gender, and experiences of oppression and discrimination related to clients' various social locations. War, exile, voluntary or involuntary nature of migration, and range of options available are also significant contextual factors.

In addition to providing a way of conceptualizing the transition experience of immigrants,

this multileveled interactive framework can offer tools for intervening on each level.

Individual Level Interventions

Most career counselling approaches primarily rely on individual quantitative and qualitative assessment and counselling tools description of which can be found elsewhere (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009; Brott, 2004; Campbell & Ungar, 2004; McIlveen, McGregor-Bayne, Alcock & Hjertum, 2003; McMahon & Patton, 2002). Depending on the client's unique circumstances, a career counselor can draw from a number of interventions, such as questionnaires, inventories, behavioural observation, interview, autobiography and biography, games, card sorts, life line, life role circles, the goal map, and many other. These tools may be useful in identifying intra-individual strengths and growing edges, and in building skills, attitudes, and personality factors helpful in immigrant career transition. For example, strategies aimed at increasing the level of resiliency and hardiness, such as portfolios (Borgen, Amundson & Reuter, 2004), or career narratives (Campbell & Ungar, 2004) can be used.

Literature on immigrant career counselling suggests individually focused strategies such as pre-departure preparation, discussion of culture shock, learning about local labour market, increasing language proficiency, and enhancing work related intercultural competences (Amundson, Westwood & Prefontaine,



1995; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Selected interventions need to make sense to clients in their contexts. Clients who hold different cultural values may not benefit from interventions designed in the White Northern American culture, and may appreciate more culturally relevant tools, such as storytelling, or community approach (Stebleton, 2007).

Relationship Level Interventions

For the counselling process to be successful, immigrant clients need to feel valued, understood, and supported (Ishiyama, 1995), which requires a complex combination of cultural, interpersonal, and personal skills on the part of the counsellor. In addition to strong counselling skills, knowledge about immigrant issues and awareness of the counsellor's own cultural assumptions is necessary.

Relationship level interventions can be aimed at helping clients examine roles and obligations in families and communities, validating their loyalty, and exploring changes in relationship and family functioning that are related to their career concerns. Considering the importance of support system in immigrant transition, strategies can be established for strengthening existing social networks, negotiating relationships with significant ones left behind, and building new relationships. Family roles, inter-generational conflict, and intercultural negotiation can be-

come the focus of career counselling sessions when relevant to the client's career concerns. Significant others can be important witnesses of career experience and competencies for immigrant clients who have lost professional rights in the new country. Using the Significant Other Questionnaire, or discussing how clients are being perceived by their significant others, can offer a new perspective on clients' strengths, abilities, and work experience (Amundson, Westwood & Prefontaine, 1995). Successful immigrant role models and mentoring programs can also be helpful (Ma & Yeh, 2010).

Context Level Interventions

The field of career counselling has been critiqued for a lack of attention to contextual factors and for inaction regarding issues of social justice (Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005; Hansen, 2003; Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Stebleton, 2007). Blustein, McWhirter & Perry (2005) suggest that vocational psychology has a potential to improve the education and working lives of all people by assuming an activist social justice agenda. According to Hartung and Blustein (2002), a just model of career decision making includes attention to the opportunity structure, in addition to differences in decision making styles. Counsellors should move to action through partnering with communities and other service providers in order to provide integrated intervention programs.

In addressing career concerns of immigrant clients, it is

not enough to acknowledge the loss of unrecognized credentials, discuss it, and help clients consider information about training, as suggested by majority of the counselling literature. Consistent with the social justice model, counsellors need to take a step beyond helping clients adjust to the unjust circumstances (Waldegrave, 2005), and work towards changing these circumstances to create equal opportunities. While acknowledgment of the loss of professional identity and exploration of training options are crucial aspects of counselling (Lee & Westwood, 1996), it is important to consider a full range of alternatives. This may include challenging the system that unjustly de-skills trained and experienced immigrant workers.

Immigrant workers are a minority work group that may not always speak out against poor conditions that they are facing (Flores et al., 2011). Equipped with knowledge regarding the impact of discrimination, oppression, and injustice, counsellors can address these issues through theory and social action, which requires stepping outside the boundaries of traditional counselling practice. Social action may involve building relationships with employers, advocating for more accessible training and hiring practices, conducting workshops for potential employers, training government representatives and legislators, and educating workers on their right and responsibilities (Flores et al., 2011). Other types of action include consultation, community outreach, program evaluation, and engagement with teachers, families, clinicians, and



administration (Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005).

Immigrants are typically involved with a number of systems, such as medical and legal organizations, language schools, welfare, childcare programs, and ethnic communities. Assuming a collaborative approach in which these various systems are connected would help provide a more integrated holding environment for immigrant clients.

Counsellors need to be careful to not narrowly conceptualize this group as oppressed and helpless (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008), but to actively engage immigrant clients and community into partnerships that will help remove barriers standing in the way of successful career transition.

Counsellor Competencies and Training Issues

As a form of counselling, career counselling of immigrants requires proficiency in complex relational and counselling skills. Career counsellors need to attend to intricacies of working with diverse populations (Sue & Sue, 2002), potential language issues, unfamiliarity with counselling, and different cultural healing practices. They need to be aware of their own cultural legacies, able to challenge own assumptions (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008), and knowledgeable about issues such as migration, colonialism, oppression, and armed conflict. Career counsellors are seldom trained to provide contextual interventions, build team ap-

proaches, be aware of immigrant related issues, or challenge their own cultural assumptions (Flores, Hsieh & Chiao, 2011; Hansen, 2003). In order to better equip career counsellors with these skills, training programs need to include materials on affecting social change, immigrant issues, and awareness of one's own cultural values and related assumptions. To offer a comprehensive and fair service to immigrant clients, counselling psychology also needs to recruit more immigrant members into its profession and its leadership (Hansen, 2003).

Conclusion

Since immigrants' hope for a better future may be diminished by barriers encountered in the new country, career counselling with this population involves restoration of hope. With a sense of hope, an immigrant client will be able to envision meaningful goals and believe that positive outcomes are likely to occur if specific actions are taken (Niles, Amundson & Neault, 2011). The counselling process can increase the level of hopefulness through several mechanisms. A trusting counselling relationship characterized by a true understanding of circumstances surrounding the immigrant client's career transition is crucial. In addition to individual level variables, often emphasized in career counselling theory, counsellors need to pay attention to relational and systemic factors that affect successful transition. Other necessary steps include collaborative examination of available options; exploration of

ways in which the range of options can be expanded; and action towards challenging systems that strip away identity, knowledge, and power from minority groups, such as immigrants. Learning that the counsellor is on their side and that change is possible, immigrant clients can start re-claiming their power and re-establishing hope for a better future.

Whether a life story is about success or failure is partly a matter of interpretation. I consider mine to be a success story, although it is also a story about loss, struggle, and inability to train or practice in my chosen field. As many other immigrants, I have experienced de-skilling and am now working towards rebuilding some of the skills. Obstacles that immigrants face in their process of career transition are enormous. These obstacles unnecessarily block us from contributing our expertise to society, causing loss of capital, and affecting our health and well-being. A more equal access to employment opportunities would not only promote immigrant health, but would also bring economic benefits to their new country.

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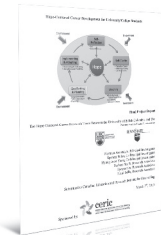
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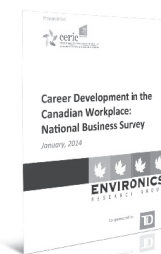
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Constructing the Future in the Liminal Spaces Between Adolescence and Adulthood: Responsibilities, Careers, and Social Contexts

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Abstract

The following paper explore the way a sample of young people in New Brunswick constructed, conceptualized and expressed concerns about adulthood, in relation to their career aspirations and their socio-economic context. The notion of liminal adulthood is used to frame the discussion in order to capture the in-between spaces of vocational identity. Furthermore we explore how these spaces are historically and socially constructed.

Contemporary research on transitions is shifting away from traditional, structural understandings of youth development towards a more relational way of examining the transition to adulthood. This shift in the research may be partly in response to media speculation that young people are delaying the movement into adulthood due to a lack of desire, focus and sense of responsibility (Aronson, 2008). Transitions to adulthood are an important phenomenon to study because the process of transitioning into adulthood has a significant influence on people's long-term outcomes. Existing theories provide substantial information about how youth can and

do take on adult roles (Nelson & Barry, 2005; Schlossberg, 1987), but few have elucidated the process of how they form aspirations, learn to be adults, and the central role career plays in definitions of successful adult identity. The purpose of this research is to begin to address this deficit by exploring the conceptualizations and concerns about adulthood that are constructed by graduating high school students, in relation to their career aspirations and socio-economic context. The concept of liminal adulthood was used to frame the analysis.

Developing clear occupational aspirations is an important step in the formation of adult identities. It is becoming increasingly important in times of economic uncertainty (see Beck, 2000) to understand the ways in which adulthood is signified and the role that career and work hold in the creation of successful adult identities because, as The European Group for Integrated Social Research (EGRIS)(2001) points out, "young people are actively trying to shape their present and future lives, albeit constrained within the economic, social and cultural conditions they find themselves within" (p.103). Thus as young people developing their adult identities, at the same time there has been a significant

downturn in the economy in many parts of the country, reducing the availability of jobs and limiting opportunity for the attainment of successful adult work identities.

This shift in economic trends is particularly true in an Atlantic Canadian where employment trends are marked by the loss of a traditional employment base, which focused on the resource economy, and marked increases in unemployment. The national unemployment rate in Canada currently hovers at 7.4%. In New Brunswick this figure is closer to 10.4% overall, with the rural areas having even greater unemployment topping out at 19.6% in some areas (Statscan, 2012). There can be many interpretations of what these unemployment figures mean but one obvious reason is a decline in available jobs. It can also mean those who have been displaced in this declining economy do not possess the education and skills required for the available labour market. Even recent improvements to the economy have been limited to certain sectors (e.g., ship-building, oil industry). At the same time, there is also a regional identity, and many Atlantic Canadians continue to identify with their home province even if they leave to work else-



where (Corbett, 2004). All of this creates specific constraints on the way that young people in Canada are shaping their lives.

Recent changes in the timing and nature of how a person traverses a life course require an unprecedented redefinition of adulthood and a shift in understanding the role of work in the transition process (Young et al., 2011). Responding to these changes, scholars such as Blatterer (2007) and Raby (2010) have proposed the concept of liminal adulthood. Raby explains that, “modern understandings of growing up have conceptualized childhood through progressive movement towards the endpoint of adulthood, with youth as a liminal, in-between phase before such adult stability” and argues that adults need to focus “on the present in the face of open-ended, temporary, reversible and individualized options for the future” (p. 69-70). With neo-liberal shifts in the global economy, Raby and Blatterer have both argued that there is an unprecedented marketing of youthfulness and, consequently, adulthood is now also coming to be defined by liminality. The strength of this perspective is that it takes into account how the transition to adulthood is socially constructed and historically and culturally specific. Thus, the ages, stages, and actions that young people use to describe adulthood can be understood to be mired in their social positions within society (Weedon, 1997; Wyn & White, 1997).

Literature

Theorizing Transitions To Adulthood

In order to situate this study, we first address some of the literature that theorizes transitions to adulthood. Akin to the shift in how we conceive a liminal adulthood is a more nuanced understanding of how work and career aspirations are key aspects of the adult identity formation process (Young et al., 2011). One example of the shift in the literature was the proposal of a new category of development called emerging adulthood. Scholars such as Arnett (2000) conceptualize emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental stage spanning ages 18-25, characterized by the exploration of prospective adult roles in areas such as work, love, and worldviews.

Arnett (2000) explained emerging adulthood as a period of time when “different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life’s possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period” (p. 469). Identity exploration during this stage involves examining identity through experiences in the areas of love, work and worldview (Arnett, 2000). With regards to work, emerging adults explore identity issues as they explore a variety of work possibilities, for example, “What kind of work am I good at? What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term? What are my chances of getting a job in the

field that seems to suit me best?” (Arnett, 2000, p. 474). In his view, a number of demographic factors, including changes in the median age of marriage and the age of first childbirth, and changes in the proportion of young people entering higher education after high school, have created an extended period of identity exploration and development in industrialized societies.

Other researchers have extended and expanded upon Arnett’s conceptualization by adopting a more agentic approach to the phenomenon. For example, “self authorship,” the internalization of meaning-making and adoption of an active role in defining identity, beliefs, and relationships, has been proposed as a process through which young people transition into adulthood (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Kegan, 1995). Similarly, Young and colleagues (2011) frame the transition to adulthood as a project that is actively and jointly constructed by young people and significant others in their lives through action, internal cognitive and emotional processes, and social meaning. Finally, Raby (2010), along with Blatterer (2007), discuss the concept of “liminal adulthood,” in which the transition to adulthood needs to be considered as emergent in ways that emphasize internal, psychological achievements such as self-confidence and flexibility to define adulthood. These concepts, particularly liminal adulthood, not only speak to the issues surrounding the transition into adulthood in contemporary North American society, but also pro-



vide a useful addition to the literature on aspirations: The language of aspirations is often used to capture the various desires, ambitions and conceptualizations held by young people about their possible futures (Turok, Kintrea, St Clair, & Benjamin, 2008). The present study was guided by Raby and Blatterer's concept of "liminal adulthood."

Aspirations have been conceptualized as a key influence on numerous developmental outcomes, including playing a role in determining future educational activity (e.g., university attendance) and eventual occupational attainment and status (Andres, Anisef, Krahn, Looker, & Thiessen, 1999). Additionally, the formation of school and work-related aspirations is conceptualized as an important part of the psychological process of transitioning into adulthood (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Although aspirations can be thought of as the process by which young people determine their goals while they are transitioning into adulthood, career aspirations have also been regarded as having the potential to equal out social differences (Morrison, Gutman & Akerman, 2008). The presumption that it is possible for young people to pursue whatever career paths they desire when they grow up is the basic tenant of aspirations in their social context (St Clair & Benjamin, 2011). As a corollary, it is also assumed that improving all young people's aspirations can reduce the discrepancies in educational outcomes and life opportunities (Turok et al., 2008). However, it is not known whether all young persons per-

ceive their aspirations as boundless. Some, especially those coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or from regions where there are fewer employment opportunities, including many parts of Atlantic Canada, may not believe that their aspirations are attainable, which can have an impact on their thinking and action during the liminal period between adolescence and adulthood.

Development of Vocational Identity

A commonly held attitude in the popular media and general public is that to ascend to successful adult identities, young people must have clear career aspirations. At the same time, there is a greater focus in the psychological literature on career decision-making difficulties experienced by young people (Osipow, 1999). This trend in the literature is motivated by the fear that young peoples' continuing indecision about careers can (and will) result in missed opportunities, inappropriate decisions, and anxiety. Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, and Koschier (1976) suggested four reasons for occupational indecision. These are: a lack of self-knowledge or insight into personal interests and aptitudes; an aptitude and interest for many different areas; an internal conflict preventing the making of a decision; the inability to come up with alternative solutions in the face of external barriers. [insert a sentence here summarizing the more recent work that has been done, building on Osipow's propositions.] Individuals typi-

cally grow more cognizant of occupational issues, and become more concrete and realistic about occupational choices with age. For example, younger adolescents may be less motivated to make a decision, seeing the necessity of making a choice as still existing in the future, or they may not have experienced the necessary self-development to have achieved a stable sense of identity (Arnett, 2000; Morgan & Ness, 2003).

In an effort to help researchers and practitioners better understand the antecedents of occupational indecision, Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) developed a career indecision taxonomy that defines a variety of problems that individuals may have in making their occupational decision. Their taxonomy identified difficulties in three broad areas: a lack of readiness to make a decision; the lack of necessary information to make a decision; and inconsistent, and therefore problematic, information. The situation is further complicated in an Atlantic Canadian social context, by historic and current high levels of unemployment. This creates additional sources of career decision-making difficulties, such as indecision due to a poor fit between youths' aspirations and the options that are available in the local economy, and conflict between the desire to remain connected with one's home community and region versus the desire to pursue their aspirations by emigrating to other regions of Canada where there are better employment opportunities (Corbett, 2007).



Key to this discussion is the need to develop a clear understanding of what is meant by identity and how we start to understand both adult and vocational identities. Building on the foundational work of Erikson (e.g., 1956, 1968), who proposed that conceptualized identity as knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of society, Marcia proposed four identity statuses that can be experienced adolescents and early adults, which have more recently been conceptualized as stages of vocational identity development (Morgan & Ness, 2003). The “diffusion” status or stage is evident when the individual has not yet experienced a developmental crisis and would not have made a commitment to vocational choice. “Foreclosure” represents an ongoing identification with the values of adolescence and a commensurate vocational commitment, though this commitment is likely without sufficient self-exploration. “Moratorium” would be evident when an individual has started to question the values of their youth and is exploring options but has not yet made a commitment to any particular vocational identity. The identity exploration characteristic of this stage sets the groundwork for commitments being made during early adulthood and beyond, and it is during this time, for college students in particular, that marked identity exploration and commitments in the career domain occur (Springer & Kerpelman, 2010). The final stage, “achievement,” represents a status of definite commitment to a vocational area based on a clearly

defined vocational identity.

Late adolescence is viewed as the period in life when childhood identifications are synthesized (Marcia, 1966) and as a time of growing occupational and ideological commitment (Erikson, 1956) as ego-identity moves towards a more achieved status. These propositions have been born out by empirical research. For example, Kroger, Martiussen and Marcia’s (2010) comprehensive meta analysis of 40 years of identity research concluded that identity achievement increases over this developmental period, although the authors also found that many individuals have not yet attained identity achievement. Identity formation involves a significant amount of personal exploration and Côté and Levine (1988) point out that the social contact typical of the university experience is likely to pressure students into exploring their identity, even when they may appear to have already made firm, albeit sometimes premature, identity commitments. Extrapolating from this concept, it is likely that individual who enter the workforce immediately after high school are also likely to experience pressure to examine their identity from the social context in which they find themselves. Furthermore, Skorikov and Vondracek’s (1998) study of vocational identity development indicated that adolescents who have successfully achieved a sense of identity in one or more of the identified identity domains (e.g., the domain of future lifestyles) also tended to be more advanced in terms of vocational identity. Their explanation for

this finding was that, although vocation and the world of work is a distinct domain of identity development, it is related to, and often precedes, the achievement of identity in other domains.

Current Issues

In tying together the concept of liminal adulthood and vocational identity, Raby (2010), albeit tentatively, suggests that there needs to be “an emphasis on skills which need to be imparted and developed over time” (p. 74) that allow young people to both be actively constructing self as well as protected through the process of developing adult identities. This makes sense in terms of developing a vocational identity for young people. Economic uncertainty and worry about the future become important factors for young people as they start to explore and understand what adulthood could look like, while at the same time we need to challenge binary positioning of young people as adults, or not yet adult, based on the attainment of a vocation. Vocational theorists that use more what Raby (2010) describes as, traditional, stable markers of adulthood, which tend to create illusive categories that young people cannot attain.

Building on this body of literature, the problem our study sought to address is the need for a deeper understanding of how young people develop vocational identities (as reflected in their emerging occupational aspirations and expectations) in the liminal space between adolescence and adulthood. This phe-



nomenon is particularly important to examine in the context of individuals who have grown up in regions with limited economic opportunities, such as Atlantic Canada. We explored this issue using a mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component of our study involved survey data collection and the use of chi-square and ANOVA to identify differences on grade 12 students' expectations and concerns about future careers, as a function of socioeconomic status (SES). The qualitative component involved inductive thematic analysis of grade 12 students' written responses to open-ended questions about multiple aspects of their career/educational plans and transition to adulthood. By achieving these objectives, we sought to advance knowledge in the fields of transitions to adulthood and career development, as well as help to develop educational policies and practices that can help high school students to make an optimal transition into the labour force or into appropriate post-secondary education.

Method

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

Participants consisted of students in their final month of Grade 12 from one large high school in a mid-sized city in Atlantic Canada. The full sample consisted of 63 males, 62 females, with an average age of 17. Most participants (78%) were English-speaking, 3% identified as aboriginal, 14% identified as belonging to a visible minority,

and 3% reported themselves to have a disability. The invitation to participate was announced during an assembly and the study was explained. Volunteers were administered the self-report survey in the school setting, which took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey consisted of demographic items, quantitative self-report items, and open-ended written response questions. No incentive was provided. The Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick vetted procedures for the survey.

Quantitative Variables

For the quantitative component of the study, most of the variables were constructed from dichotomous, single-item self-report items, such as "Do you worry about getting a career/job? Yes/No." Variables representing participants' perception of (a) being able to attain their ideal career, (b) being worried about careers, (c) having their career prospects affected by the fact they live in New Brunswick, and (d) being worried about adulthood were constructed in this manner. Participants were also asked about the occupations that they (a) ideally aspired to, and (b) realistically expected to achieve if they were not able to attain their ideal career. Responses to these open-ended questions were coded using the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system maintained by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. These NOC codes were used to operationalize the prestige levels associated with the general categories of

participants' reported ideal and expected careers. Finally, participants' perceived socio-economic status (SES) was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from "poverty level" to "wealthy." However, because more than 80% of the participants reported being "average" or "above average," it was necessary to dichotomize the SES into two categories: (a) average or lower; (b) above average or higher.

Qualitative Variables

For the qualitative component the young people were surveyed through open-ended questions that touched on areas such as what careers they were interested in, what they found appealing about those careers, and the people and situations, including geographic location/place, that may have influenced, both positively and negatively, their education and career plans. Other questions asked the young people to consider what they thought it meant to be an adult, what they planned to do after high school, and what they thought the chances were of getting a job after formal education. The young people were also encouraged to share anything else they thought would be relevant about what they wanted to do in the future and the ways in which they thought about adulthood.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Screening of the data revealed minor amounts of missing data in the dichotomous variables (Concerned about Attaining Ideal



Career = 3 cases; Concerned about Future Career = 0 cases; Concerned about the Effect of Living in the Province = 3 cases; Concerned about Becoming an Adult = 3 cases). A regression-based multiple imputation technique was used to estimate the missing values for these cases. In contrast, there were substantial amounts of missing data in ideal career and expected career variables, which precluded the use of missing data estimation methods for these variables. Instead, cases with missing data on these variables were removed from the analyses that used occupational categories based on socioeconomic status as the dependent variable, resulting in a sample size of 84 for these analyses. Although relatively low, power analysis revealed that this final sample size would be adequate to detect medium sized effects ($\alpha = .05$, $1 - \beta = .80$, $f = .30$).

Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine whether there were differences between the higher and lower SES groups in terms of the proportion of participants who expressed concern about attaining their ideal career, about careers in general, about the effects of living in their home province on their career prospects, and about becoming an adult. A Between-Within ANOVA was used to determine whether (a) there were significant differences in the socioeconomic status levels of students ideal versus expected careers, (b) the SES of students' career aspirations differed according to their SES, and (c) whether any interactions existed between SES and ideal

versus expected career aspirations.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data from the open-ended questions were analyzed using an inductive, iterative (nonlinear) thematic analysis strategy. Two researchers worked together on the analysis of the data and discussed possible interpretations and identified the content in the written responses that were relevant to the focus of the inquiry. Categories of themes emerged from the data, rather than being specified a priori. Focus was paid to the language and discourses that emerged in the short answers. The data were coded by marking segments with descriptive words and then scrutinizing the discourses that emerged.

Understanding discourse was essential to this study and is based on an understanding of how our social worlds are inscribed in and expressed through language (Bové, 1990). Discourses shape the object that is being spoken about through grids and hierarchies that aid in the institutional categorization of people (Foucault, 1972). Power relations are inscribed in discourses as knowledge, and power relationships are achieved by a construction of "truths" about the social and natural world (Luke, 1995). In one sense, discourse is both a social practice that constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices (Phillips & Jørgenson, 2002). What this means is that language should be looked at within its social context and moreover it is important to examine how dis-

courses function ideologically. As Phillips and Jørgenson (2002) suggest, "discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups" (p. 63). Thus there are ideological effects of discourses that are important sites of study. Phillips and Jørgenson (2002) also connect discourse to ideology and hegemony pointing to how discursive practice can be seen as an aspect that contributes to reproduction of the order and discourse of which it is a part.

Reflexivity, in keeping with a discursive approach, was an important part of the process of data collection and analysis (MacBeth, 2001). This involved thinking and rethinking the data and considering how interpretations changed throughout the process of conducting and analyzing the research. This process also required a continual examination of the beliefs held by the researchers and the process of conducting research, and questioning preconceived notions of career, responsibility and the role of liminality (Benjamin, 2012). The researchers paid attention to how personal understandings and experiences affected the ways in which data interpreted.

Results

Quantitative Findings

The data revealed that a large majority of the students believed they would succeed in obtaining their ideal career/job ($n = 95$; 79% of the sample); less than half the participants were worried about future careers ($n = 51$;



43%); approximately half believed that living in their specific province within Atlantic Canada would affect their career choices ($n = 58$; 48%); and a majority of the students were not worried about becoming an adult ($n = 77$; 66%).

Chi-square analyses revealed some important differences between the higher and lower SES groups, in terms of perceptions about these phenomena. Specifically, students in the lower SES group were significantly more likely to report being worried about their future careers than those in the higher SES group ($\chi^2(1) = 5.84, p < .05$) but were significantly less likely to report being worried about becoming an adult than those in the higher SES group ($\chi^2(1) = 4.19, p < .05$). The two groups did not, however, differ in terms of their expectation of being able to attain their ideal career ($\chi^2(1) = 0.24, p > .05$) or their perception that living in their province would affect their career choices ($\chi^2(1) = 2.98, p > .05$).

Results of the Between-Within ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the socioeconomic level between students' ideal careers, and the careers they realistically expect to attain ($F(1,83) = 0.61, p > .05$). One contributor to this apparent incongruence may be that some students seemed to think of ideal careers as those that fulfilled their passions, and their realistic careers as ones that are more practical, but not necessarily ones

that are easier to obtain. For example, one student whose ideal career was "interior designer/real estate agent" because "I am interested in housing and that field of work" cited "businesswoman" as her realistically expected career, because "it is easier." The ANOVA also revealed no significant differences between lower and higher SES students in terms of the socioeconomic levels of the careers to which they aspired ($F(1,83) = 0.15, p > .05$), and no interaction between the effects of ideal versus expected careers and SES ($F(1,83) = 1.28, p > .05$).

Although the results were non-significant, charting the marginal means of the sub-groups from the ANOVA suggest that it may be worthwhile to continue to explore the issue of how SES can affect students' career aspirations (see Figure 1). Specifically, it is

possible that limitations in our study (see Limitations section) are masking the existence of a real SES by aspiration interaction effect such that, for lower SES students, students' expected or 'back-up' careers are less prestigious than their ideal ones, but for higher SES students, their ideal and their expected careers are approximately equal in socioeconomic levels. However, since no significant differences emerged in the ANOVA, this possibility remains a speculation at this time.

Qualitative Findings

The themes that emerged highlight three constructs that this group of graduating high school students are experiencing as they reflect on the transition to adulthood: (a) adulthood is asso-

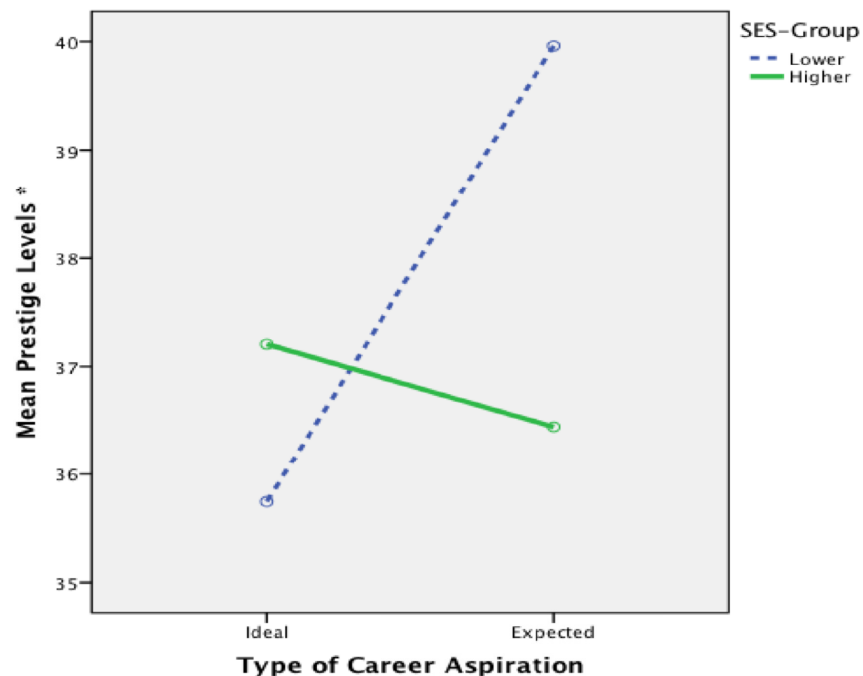


Figure 1: Differences in mean socioeconomic levels of students' ideal career aspiration and the career that expected to realistically obtain if they were unable to attain their ideal one. * Higher numbers correspond to less prestigious occupations, consistent with the NOC classification system. (e.g., management careers = 0; Occupations in manufacturing / utilities = 9)



ciated with taking on more life responsibilities; (b) the issue of finding work and pursuing careers is a substantial worry for people at this stage of development; and (c) students are aware of the socio-economic conditions that shape their ability to become adults.

Participants' responses suggest that the notion of adulthood is constructed around a liminal adult identity that includes the need to become more responsible. One young person summarized this association by reporting that she defined adulthood as having "more responsibilities to deal with." This expectation reflects a hallmark of a liminal adulthood, because it emphasizes the internal psychological achievements that are used to define adulthood. Many young people also perceived that they would need to take on greater responsibilities to become adults, a prospect that they found worrying. As one young person stated, "I worry about all the new responsibilities that I'll have, paying the bills, finding a career and starting a family are all the big challenges." Similarly, another young person reflected, "Sometimes all of the responsibilities adults have can seem a little scary." Responsibility in this context has become part of the social construction that Raby (2010) and Blatterer (2007) describe, as young people have learned that they need to be taking more responsibility in order to achieve successful adult identities.

The data also illuminated some of the occupational and work-related issues that young

people are concerned with as they form adult identities. Many students described experiencing substantial career indecision even as high school graduation was looming, a finding that is consistent with existing literature suggesting that vocational identity formation and career indecision can extend well past adolescence (Marcia, 1966; Osipow, 1999). One student wrote, "I have absolutely no idea what I want to do after high school." Another young person described this concern in the following way, "It's scary. Whether they admit it or not, the thought of picking their future career at 17 terrifies most teenagers. As a general rule, everyone just wants to leave a mark." Here career is seen as an outcome that must be attained in order to achieve adulthood rather than the other way around; that is, participants' statements did not reflect a belief that one must first become an adult before being capable of making a career decision. This has important implications if the indecision is rooted in a liminal space. Specifically, many young people hold ideals in their heads about future careers and while there is stress about making a career decision it still remains an ideal - that when you are an adult you will have a specific full-time job. But at the same time there is a great deal of fear and worry about this full-time job because there has been such erosion in secure available jobs.

Others articulated that, although they were not worried about being adult in general, they were concerned about obtaining secure employment: "Not so

much being an adult, but ... getting a secure job ... the responsibilities once you have graduated high school are huge!" One young person expressed this concern as being worried about "doing everything that needs to get done right." Another young person contrasted the consequences of financial difficulties in adulthood with those experienced in adolescence, "It is hard to predict what will happen with the economy. How will I support myself, let alone a family? If I lost a job or get laid-off, I can't ask my family for help like I can now with my parents." Overall, the pattern of findings that emerged regarding work and career contradict contemporary media representation of young people as individuals who are stalling in their development of adult identities. Instead, the data from this study suggest that work and career are a central concern even at the end of High School, as young people look to the future.

Occupational aspirations and conceptions of adulthood also appeared to be affected by socio-economic marginalization (Furlong, 2005). Some participants described concerns about being unable to pursue their ideal images of what they would like to be as adults due to their socio-economic conditions (e.g., not having sufficient funds to attend university) or lack of opportunities available in the region (e.g., realizing that there are no jobs in a desired occupational field within the province). These findings are consistent with the socio-economic context of Atlantic Canada, as well as previous



research on young people's career development in the region (Corbett, 2004; Jeffery, Lehr, Haché, & Campbell, 1992).

Discussion

The results from both the qualitative and the quantitative analyses suggest that, when you are less well off, you are more worried about concrete things like work and income than about general notions of becoming an adult. In contrast, young people from higher SES backgrounds assume that the work will come and therefore are able to think about adulthood in more general, conceptual terms. These findings are consistent with existing research but are important to consider because they highlight the usefulness of viewing the transition to adulthood as liminal: As demonstrated by these young people, there is a flexibility and a nervousness, as well as, for some, a self-confidence to how they are defining adulthood.

One of the primary contributions of this study is to shed light on how the aspirations and conceptions of career of young people about to graduate from High School in Atlantic Canada reflect a period of liminal adulthood. Although previous studies have examined aspirations of youth and the literature on transitions to adulthood (Aronson, 2008; Furlong & Biggart, 1999; Young, et al., 2011), it is important to continue to examine how young people develop adult identities related to work, and the aspirations they expect to carry with them into adulthood. The results of this study suggest that re-

search on human development must allow for a dynamic understanding of the transition to adulthood, and how factors such as career concerns and socio-economic contexts can affect how a young person proceeds through liminal adulthood. There must also be more provision for understanding of how constructions of adulthood change over time, and how these constructions may be linked to young people's career development and employment opportunities in the context of socio-economic circumstances and constraints. Although the location of this study in Atlantic Canada highlights these issues, many of the findings are generalizable to other regions and countries where there are relatively few opportunities within local communities.

The results also challenge popular media assumptions that young people are avoiding and delaying the transition into adulthood. As such, our study adds empirical support to Arnett's claim that the persistent belief of individuals at this life stage being "suffering, selfish, slackers" is a myth (Arnett, 2007, p. 23). Indeed, participants in this sample appear to be preoccupied with the issue, and are highly emotionally invested in becoming adults and finding work. Apparent delays and avoidance in acting to achieve their adult identities may actually reflect a perception that the process of becoming fully adult to be fraught with barriers and challenges, some of which appear to be overwhelming. This understanding of what is occurring can provide a foundation for educational policies and practices

that can help high school students to make an optimal transition into the labor force or into appropriate post-secondary education.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

This study adds further weight to the growing body of evidence that challenges simplistic notions of adolescence versus adulthood that continue to be taken as status quo by some educators and reified in educational policies. There is a need to critically examine the ways in which professionals and policy makers acknowledge the transition to adulthood, and the distinct educational and vocational needs of individuals who are experiencing liminal adulthood. Indeed, EGRIS (2001) argues that "the coincidence of increased risks and uncertainty in young people's transitions to adulthood makes them a high priority for policies concerned with social integration: education and training, labour market policy, welfare institutions, youth and social work ... most institutions continue to neglect the changing nature of transitions and therefore run the risk of failing to address young adults' aspirations, needs and possibilities, they are confronted by what we refer to as 'misleading trajectories'" (p. 101-102).

Recognizing and understanding liminal adulthood and the transition into the labour force may assist educators to (a) modify policies to better account for the reality of the transition to adulthood, (b) identify when best to situate interventions, and (c) understand what kinds of inter-



ventions will best address the needs of individuals in this phase of life, which are different from both early adolescents and adult learners who are in the third decade of life or older. For example, some of the pressure that students at the end high school feel about the future may reflect a dichotomization of adulthood as adults who know what they want to do for a career and have the capacity to take on life's responsibilities, versus adolescents are lacking these qualities. If so, then some of the worries may be relieved by introducing the notion of liminal adulthood in high school guidance programming, to normalize the concept of an extended transition period that is characterized by uncertainty and exploration of both careers and broader identities.

Limitations

The results of the quantitative portion of the study must be interpreted with caution, due to the presence of several limitations. The fact that an overwhelming majority of participants reported being of "average" or "above average" SES suggests that there were inadequate numbers of students from substantially low and high SES backgrounds in the sample. Although this is representative of the city in which the data were collected, drawing on samples from other locations in the province, with more extreme ranges of SES, may be necessary to truly uncover the effects of SES on career aspirations and perceptions of future work and life. Similarly, the relatively low

sample size in the ANOVA was another limitation, although it must be recognized that the non-significant results cannot be explained by low power, given the fact that power analyses revealed that sample size was adequate to yield significant results for medium-sized effects. A more substantive problem may be that the NOC classification code does not adequately capture gradients in occupational socioeconomic levels that reflect social norms and understandings. If this is the case, then a more sensitive classification system may be necessary to fully explore differences in high school students aspired versus expected career paths. Unfortunately, the authors are not aware of any such system that has been created for the Canadian social context.

The qualitative data, while providing some rich understandings of how young people learn adult identities, also has its limitations. It is important to note that the survey employed brief written responses rather than interactive interviews, and so did not permit probing or clarification questions to gain a deeper understanding of what the participants meant by their statements. Similarly, this approach relied on participants' willingness to self-report answers and was dependent on participants' capacity to present their ideas in writing; the experienced of individuals with language difficulties, poor written expression or other difficulties with writing may not have been adequately captured in our study. Finally, although the anonymous nature of the surveys may have freed the

students to write what they wanted without fear of judgement, it also precluded any form of participant validation, thus increasing the likelihood that some experiences were not adequately captured or described in the themes that emerged. While these issues do not invalidate our findings, these limitations help us to recognize to the need for continued examination that employ more in depth data collection methods as the study continues.

Conclusion

Given that the subject of liminal adult identities and the influence of occupational aspirations and expectations on the formation of those identities is relatively new to the fields of vocational and counseling psychology, we believe that our findings may be most useful in suggesting future directions for research. In addition to the study of liminality and the influence of occupational aspirations, which we noted previously, we also recommend a continuation of research that builds on this study and the findings of other career and education scholars working in an Atlantic Canadian context, (e.g., Borgen, Amundson, McVicar, 2002; Corbett, 2004, 2007; Jeffery, et al., 1992) to continue to examine young peoples' processes of developing adult identities and the influence of the individual, school, family and place on educational and occupational aspirations and occupational expectations.



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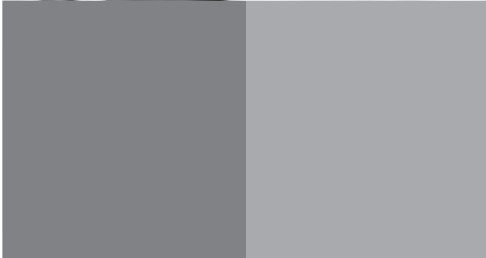
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A Theoretical Model of the Antecedents of Educational Goal Commitment

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Abstract

The transition from high school to college is a key point in students' educational route. During this transition, the ability to formulate an educational goal and the will to actively engage with this goal are assumed to lead to favorable academic outcomes. However, students differ in their commitment to their educational goal, which may translate into differences in goal implementation. How can we explain such differences? A theoretical model of the factors influencing students' commitment to their educational goal is proposed. This model is composed of two proximal antecedents—goal importance and expectancy of goal achievement—and two distal antecedents—goal abstraction and goal integration. The proximal antecedents are mainly based on the expectancy-value framework (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and the distal antecedents on the assumptions relative to the hierarchical goal structure (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

The transition from high school to college is a key point in students' educational trajectories,

as it requires them to make educational choices, which have a considerable impact on their future career prospects. Traditionally, vocational psychology has focused on the processes of interests development and career decidedness (e.g., Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Osipow, 1999). However, Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) have suggested another task for students after they have decided on their future programs of study: they have to commit to a particular educational or career goal. Richardson et al. (2009) have argued that what is specifically important for students is to generate intentions regarding future life and to be actively engaged with these intentions. Several theoretical and empirical arguments support this argument.

The ability to formulate educational goals should be crucial during the transition from high school to college (Hirschi & Vondracek, 2009). Goal theorists claim a positive relationship between academic aspirations and academic success. This is due to the behaviors in which students engage when they have strong aspirations (Ames, 1992;

Eccles-Parsons et al., 1983; Harackiewicz, Barron, & Elliot, 1998; Locke & Latham, 2002; McGregor & Elliot, 2002; Meece, Eccles-Parsons, Kaczala, Goff, Futterman, 1982). Based on theoretical models (e.g., Eccles-Parsons et al., 1983; Lent et al., 1994; Meece et al., 1982; Tinto, 1993) and empirical research on student attrition and achievement (e.g., Eccles, Vida, & Barber, 2004; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Neuville et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), it has been showed that high-school students' commitment to their educational goal is an important factor in the explanation of achievement-related behaviors (i.e., choice actualization, commitment to the chosen field of study, academic adjustment at the beginning of higher education), which are in turn predictive of college students' academic achievement (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007). Goals serve as guides, providing both direction and energy for behavior. As students develop these aspirations or goals, they construct a purpose for engaging in activities related to goal achievement (Pizzolato, 2006). To move from commitment to achievement, they regulate their



behavior to improve their chances of achieving their goals (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; McGregor & Elliot, 2002; Wentzel, 1991).

However, not everyone is equally committed to their personal goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Students differ in their commitment to their educational goals, which may translate into differences in goal implementation and, therefore, in goal achievement (Note 1). How can we explain such differences in students' commitment? Do the representations students have of their educational goal influence their commitment to this goal? Are people more committed to attaining an abstract goal (expressing an identity to be developed), than a concrete goal (expressing an action to be completed)? Does the perception of links between the educational goal and other goals contribute to this commitment? In other words, is goal commitment affected by goal abstraction and goal integration, and do these dimensions interact in their influence on that commitment?

Few studies have investigated the antecedents of goal commitment, and most of these have focused on assigned goals (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Locke & Latham, 2002). We address this research gap by developing a theoretical model of the antecedents of students' commitment to their own personal educational goals. Identifying these antecedents could contribute to improving guidance for students as they develop their educational objectives. We first present the

current state of research on goal commitment and then outline why studying its antecedents is theoretically important. Then we explore how the expectancy-value framework (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) and the hierarchical goal structure (Carver & Scheier, 1998) may contribute to a better understanding of these antecedents. Based on these frameworks, we suggest a theoretical model of the antecedents of educational goal commitment, which may have implications for both research and practice in vocational counseling.

Goal Commitment

Goals can be generally viewed as cognitive representations of the things we wish to accomplish (Harackiewicz et al., 1998). Goal commitment is defined as the extent to which a particular goal is associated with a strong sense of determination and with the willingness to invest effort in attaining it (Brunstein, 1993; Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). Empirical studies have identified positive consequences of goal commitment, which include persistence and performance in pursuit of the goal, as well as some dimensions of psychological well-being (e.g., positive emotions) (Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996; Pomerantz, Saxon, & Oishi, 2000). Germeijs and Verschueren (2007) have investigated goal commitment in the more specific context of career decision-making processes among final-year high-school

students—educational goal commitment. An educational goal is defined as the goal students are pursuing by choosing their program of study. Their results suggest that educational goal commitment is the most important predictor of choice satisfaction, choice stability, and adjustment in the chosen option, and therefore is an indirect predictor of performance.

Studies of the antecedents of goal commitment have mainly been conducted in the framework of goal-setting theory (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Locke & Latham, 2002). Hollenbeck and Klein (1987) developed a model with two proximal antecedents that directly influence goal commitment, and two categories of distal antecedents that indirectly influence goal commitment through their impact on proximal antecedents. The two proximal antecedents are the attractiveness and the expectancy of goal attainment. These antecedents are, in turn, influenced by two categories of factors: (a) situational factors (e.g., reward structures, performance constraints, supervisor supportiveness), and (b) personal factors (e.g., need for achievement, organizational commitment, job involvement). However, most goal-setting studies have focused on assigned goals (quite common in an organizational context). Most of the factors identified may therefore be specific to this type of goals and not relevant to personal goals. Further research is needed to explore how



commitment to a personal goal develops.

There is evidence to suggest that people invest more effort in attaining personal goals than assigned ones (Downie, Koestner, Horberg, & Haga, 2006). However, it is not necessarily the case that all subjects are equally committed to their personal goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). In the context of career decision-making, Germeijs and Verschuere (2006) highlighted some antecedents of commitment to a personal goal. They found that how individuals cope with decisional tasks preceding goal commitment determines the strength of that commitment. More specifically, the quality of the choice process (e.g., the number of explorations made) has a positive impact on commitment to the chosen educational goal. However, Germeijs and Verschuere's model only considers antecedents that are part of the decision-making process. Wrosch and his colleagues have suggested additional antecedents of commitment to a personal goal (Wrosch, Miller, Scheier, & Brun de Pontet, 2007; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz, & Carver, 2003), including the characteristics of the goal itself. The aim of the present paper is to develop a theoretical model based on this suggestion, and therefore to identify characteristics of personal goals that potentially influence commitment to these goals. More specifically, we postulate goal importance and expectancy of goal achievement, as proximal antecedents, and goal abstraction and goal integration,

as distal antecedents of goal commitment.

Goal Importance and Expectancy of Goal Achievement

The proximal antecedents investigated by studies of commitment to assigned goals are quite general antecedents, not specific to the type of goal. By contrast, the distal antecedents seem to be much more specific to the assigned goals in an organizational context (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987). These proximal antecedents might therefore also be valid for personal goals. Commitment to a personal goal would then be influenced by the value of the goal and the expectancy or probability of goal achievement, as perceived by the individual. Expectancy of goal achievement is defined as a personal belief about one's ability to pursue and attain the goal. Among the four components of goal value, goal importance will be more specifically the focus of our investigation due to its particularly strong link to goal commitment. Goal importance can be defined as the personal perception of the attainment value attached to this goal (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Some theoretical and empirical arguments can be found to support these proximal antecedents of the commitment to a personal goal. The expectancy-value model assumes that expectancy and task value influence task choice, self-regulation, persistence, and performance (Eccles & Wigfield,

2002). In their studies of educational and career choices, Eccles and her colleagues found support for the role of both expectancy of success in the choice, and the value attached to the choice (Durik, Vida, & Eccles, 2006; Eccles, Barber, & Jozefowicz, 1999; Updegraff, Eccles, Barber, & O'Brien, 1996). Expectancies for success are defined as individuals' beliefs about how well they will do on upcoming tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The value of a task (i.e., individuals' perception of how a task meets their needs) has four components: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost (Eccles-Parsons et al., 1983). One of these components, attainment value, is defined as the personal importance of doing well at the task. The construct of attainment value is quite similar to that of goal importance, as are the constructs of expectancies for success and for goal achievement. Moreover, the study of task choice—the decision on whether or not to begin or to continue to invest in a given task or activity—can be related to the study of goal commitment.

These constructs are of course different, since attainment value, expectancies for success, and task choice are constructs applied to a task, whereas goal importance, expectancy of goal achievement, and goal commitment are constructs applied to a goal; task choice is a dichotomous construct whereas there can be varying degrees of goal commitment. However, given that their content is quite



similar, we postulate that Eccles and Wigfield's (2002) work on the link between task choice on the one hand, and attainment value and expectancies for success on the other hand, is informative for our investigation of the relationship between goal commitment, goal importance, and expectancy of goal achievement. Some support for this assumption can be found in studies based on expectancy-value models of motivation. Klinger, Barta, and Maxeiner (1980) showed that goal commitment is positively predicted by goal value and goal expectancy. Moreover, a study by Boudrenghien, Frenay, and Bourgeois (2011) was found to more specifically show the positive links between commitment to an educational goal on the one hand, and goal importance and self-efficacy toward this goal on the other hand. However, this study was correlational and, therefore, could not provide any information about the causality of these relationships.

Based on other theoretical frameworks, two studies have provided additional support for the link between goal importance and goal commitment. Working on goal disengagement, Wrosch et al. (2007) suggested that some goals are more difficult to renounce than others because of their centrality to an individual's self-concept. However, this suggestion is not based on empirical evidence. In the framework of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), goal importance has been found to predict individuals'

determination to achieve their goal (Sideridis, 2001).

Goal Abstraction and Goal Integration

Carver and Scheier (1998) suggest that the importance of a goal is, in turn, influenced by its position within an individual's goal hierarchy, which is determined by its degree of integration into this hierarchy and its level of abstraction. Since commitment is influenced by goal importance, importance is hypothesized to mediate the impact of goal integration and abstraction on commitment. As an illustration of this mediation model, consider a student who chooses to study medicine. This student pursues an educational goal by choosing medical studies (e.g., to become a doctor, to train in neuroscience, to become a graduate, to work in a maternity hospital). We suggest that his/her representation of this educational goal at a given place within his/her hierarchical goal structure influences the commitment to that goal, because this placement conveys a certain importance to the goal.

Based on studies by Carver and Scheier (1998) and Sheldon and Kasser (1995), we define the degree of integration of a goal as the extent to which the goal is linked to other goals within the hierarchy. More specifically, when a goal is perceived as integrated, it means that the achievement of this goal is perceived as contributing to the pursuit of other goals at the same or higher levels of the hierarchy, and that the achievement of that

goal is perceived as depending on the achievement of other goals at the same or at lower levels of the hierarchy. For example, a person who perceives his/her goal as integrated sees clearly how other goals he/she is pursuing will help him/her achieve this goal. Goal importance increases according to the number and significance of links with other goals in the hierarchy. In other words, a goal that is linked to other goals is more important than an isolated goal.

A goal that is formulated at a high level of abstraction concerns being a particular kind of person (a be-goal), whereas a goal that is formulated at a low level of abstraction concerns completing a particular kind of action (a do-goal) (Carver & Scheier, 1998). The concept of goal abstraction, as defined by these authors, only has to be understood as distinguishing goals that describe what sort of person one wants to become, from goals that describe the action one wants to complete. A be-goal is represented at the higher levels of the hierarchical goal structure and generally applies for a long time, whereas a do-goal is represented in the lower levels of the hierarchical goal structure and generally applies for a short time. Within the hierarchy, a do-goal is supposed to be a subgoal that (in)directly contributes to the attainment of a be-goal. In their theoretical framework, Carver and Scheier (1998) actually defined more specific levels than this distinction between be-goals and do-goals (e.g., principles, programs, sequences), but they



did not much elaborate these specific distinctions. Goal importance is assumed to depend on the level of goal abstraction defined as distinguishing be- and do-goals. More specifically, be-goals at higher levels of abstraction are more fundamental to the over-riding sense of self, and are therefore intrinsically more important than do-goals at lower levels of abstraction.

Abstraction level and degree of integration have rarely been empirically studied with reference to the model developed by Carver and Scheier (1998). Other theories, conceptually similar, have been empirically tested, but these studies have typically focused on only one of the two dimensions. On the one hand, previous research on abstraction level (Emmons, 1992; Vallacher & Wegner, 1989) has investigated the distinction between general and specific goals, but has focused only on goal characteristics (i.e., general, distal or abstract compared to specific, proximal or concrete goals), and not on the links between goals. On the other hand, studies of the degree of integration (Sheldon & Emmons, 1995; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995) have looked at the links between goals, but without taking goal characteristics into account.

Our aim is to integrate the nature of goals and the links between goals into one model. As other researchers have pointed out, to date too little research has connected future goals and proximal subgoals (Husman & Lens, 1999; Miller & Brickman, 2004; Schultz, 1997). However, Tabachnick, Miller, and Relyea

(2008) suggested that high student drop-out rates in college could be due to the fact that at least some students are not aware of their own goals, and have not thought much about aligning their future goals and proximal subgoals in a coherent way. An approach combining the nature of goals (their abstraction level) and the links among them (the degree of integration) could fill this gap.

To develop such an approach connecting goals and subgoals, we need two components: (a) a distinction between be-goals (i.e., in general, future goals) on the one hand, and do-goals or subgoals on the other hand (as given by the construct “abstraction level”), and (b) the way these goals are linked to each other (as given by the construct “degree of integration”). Carver and Scheier (1998) suggested combining these two components when they assumed that there are hierarchical links between abstract and concrete goals: abstract goals are at the top of the hierarchy, whereas concrete goals are at the bottom. Two studies investigated goal abstraction level within this hierarchical model (Bay & Daniel, 2003; Lawson, 1997). In their results, the authors showed that knowledge of goal abstraction level is necessary for a complete understanding of the decision-making process. However, although these studies were conducted with reference to the hierarchical goal structure, only the abstraction-level dimension was taken into account; the degree of integration of the goals was not investigated. Our review

of the literature has identified only one study investigating assumptions relative to both goal abstraction and to goal integration (Boudrenghien et al., 2011). This study showed a mediation of the impact of those aspects of goal representation on goal commitment, by goal importance. However, the design was correlational and therefore did not allow causal relationships to be tested.

The investigation of abstraction and integration within the same model allows us to raise the question of the potential interaction between these dimensions (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). We assume that abstraction and integration interact in their impact on goal commitment and that be-goals do not necessarily always enhance this commitment. Indeed, Carver and Scheier’s (1998) assumption that be-goals are more important than do-goals seems to be in contradiction with the proposition that clear and specific proximal goals result in greater intrinsic motivation, personal satisfaction, self-efficacy, persistence, and performance than vague, general and distal goals (Bandura, 1986; Locke & Latham, 2002; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989). This proposition is, however, qualified by Bandura who recognized the role of long-term goals in human motivation when he said: “The anticipation of distal outcomes provides general direction for choosing activities, and it raises the level of involvement in them” (1986, p. 336). Furthermore, Bandura suggested that personal development is best served by



combining distal aspirations with proximal self-guidance. The interest of this combination can be explained by the reciprocal influence between goals and subgoals (Miller & Brickman, 2004; Schultz, 1997). The initial commitment to a valued distal goal is the catalyst for developing proximal goals and giving them meaning. Then, as the system of subgoals becomes clearer, and particular subgoals are achieved, the level of commitment to the future goals grows stronger.

Integrating these various assumptions with Carver and Scheier's (1998) suggestions, we postulate the following interaction effect. We hypothesize that the positive impact of goal abstraction on goal commitment will appear when the goal is perceived as highly integrated. Indeed, if students perceive their educational goal as linked to other goals, including more concrete ones, the lack of information concerning the actions needing to be taken (due to the focus on a be-goal) is compensated for by an awareness of the concrete paths to progress toward this more abstract dream. Seeing how one's educational goal is related to concrete goals helps to identify what this goal means in practice, and therefore how it can be pursued and attained. In other words, if the be-goal is integrated, its potential negative impact due to its distal character (Locke & Latham, 2002) can be balanced by its integration into the hierarchical goal structure, and therefore, only its positive influence on goal commitment (Carver & Scheier,

1998) remains. This interest in combining a high level of abstraction with a high degree of integration is in line with Bandura's (1986) assumption that personal development is best served by combining distal aspirations (i.e., be-goals) with proximal self-guidance (i.e., integration with other goals, including more concrete ones).

However, when there is not much integration, we hypothesize that goal abstraction will negatively influence goal commitment (as assumed by Locke and Latham (2002), Schunk (1990), and Zimmerman (1989)). If a goal is perceived as rather isolated, the focus on a be-goal and its implied lack of information concerning the actions to be taken are not (sufficiently) balanced by links to more concrete goals. Indeed, perceiving one's educational goal as under-integrated makes the identification of the concrete paths towards it more difficult. We suggest that, when there is not much integration, students focusing on a do-goal will be more committed. Indeed, do-goals became interesting when they compensate for a lack of integration within the

hierarchical goal structure. When students have difficulties perceiving the links between their educational goal and other goals, including more concrete ones, the focus on a concrete do-goal helps them to have a better idea of what they should do.

The Proposed Theoretical Model

Figure 1 illustrates our hypothetical model concerning the antecedents of educational goal commitment. This model is mainly based on Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions. We suggest two positive main effects of the abstraction level and the degree of integration on goal importance, and therefore, on goal commitment.

However, we cannot deny the assumption that distal goals result in lower motivation than proximal ones (Locke & Latham, 2002; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989). Our theoretical model integrates this assumption by suggesting an interaction effect (in addition to the main effects). We propose that it is more specifically in situations of low integration that the abstraction level negatively

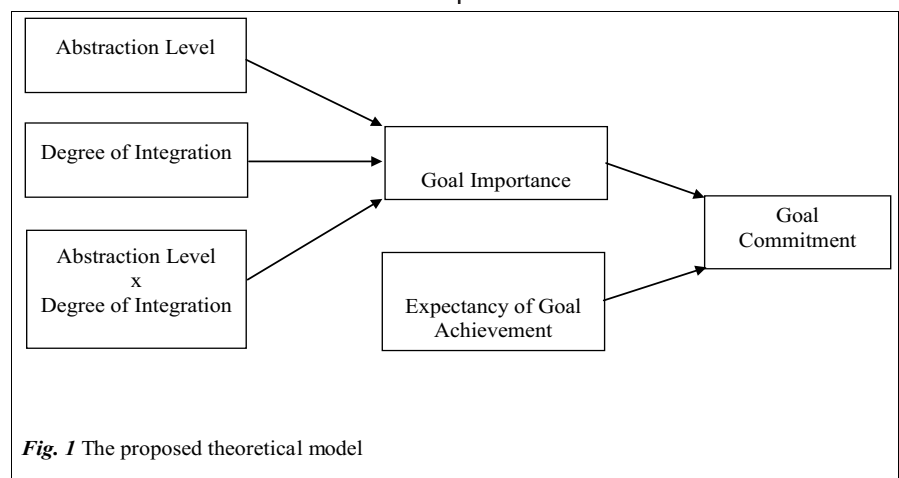


Fig. 1 The proposed theoretical model



influences goal commitment through goal importance. However, this negative impact is assumed to be weaker than the positive impact observed when the goal is perceived as integrated. Indeed, based on Carver and Scheier's (1998) definition of goal abstraction, we are interested in the distinction between be-goals and do-goals. Even if be-goals tend to be more distal than do-goals, this is not necessarily true for all be-goals. Therefore, the negative impact of goal abstraction when integration is low, which is due to this distal tendency of be-goals, should be less marked than the positive impact of goal abstraction when integration is high, which is due to the identity character that defines be-goals (i.e., being a particular kind of person).

In addition to goal importance, a second factor is assumed to positively and directly influence goal commitment: the expectancy of goal achievement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Although Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions only concern goal importance, this second proximal antecedent could also play a role in the mediation of the impact of the distal antecedents on goal commitment. For example, awareness of the subgoals through which a goal can be achieved (which is partially implied by the construct of integration) could enhance a student's perceived ability to pursue the goal, and therefore, his/her commitment to this goal. This potential link is not included in our model, given its lack of theoretical support, but should be

empirically explored.

Conclusion and Implications

The importance of students' commitment to their educational goal has been highlighted by several researchers, through the demonstration of its consequences on achievement-related behaviors. However, very few studies have looked at the factors that influence this commitment. Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) assumed that the commitment to a chosen educational goal is enhanced by the quality of the choice process. Our theoretical model suggests another process of influence on educational goal commitment. This process is based on Wrosch et al.'s (2007) assumption that the commitment to a goal is influenced by some characteristics of the goal itself, as perceived by the individual. More specifically, based on two main theoretical frameworks (i.e., the expectancy-value paradigm and the hierarchical goal structure), we postulate two goal characteristics as proximal antecedents—goal importance and expectancy of goal achievement—and two other characteristics as distal antecedents—goal abstraction and goal integration.

By suggesting this new theoretical understanding of the process through which commitment increases, the present paper opens a new direction for empirical research. Our theoretical model needs to be empirically investigated, Carver and Scheier's (1998) assumptions

having rarely been put to the test. Initial empirical evidence has been produced by Boudrenghien et al. (2011). However, this study did not allow causal relationships to be tested. An experimental investigation of our theoretical model is suggested by Boudrenghien, Frenay, Bourgeois, Karabenick, and Eccles (submitted). This study complements Boudrenghien et al.'s (2011) by testing the causality of the relationships implied by our model, as well as by investigating the specific interaction effect we postulated. However, it does not take into account students' expectancy of goal achievement. Additional empirical research is needed to complement these first studies and replicate their results, using various methodological designs.

Our theoretical model may help counselors in their guidance of students during the transition from high school to college. Traditionally, counseling interventions have focused on the career decision-making process. The present paper proposes another, complementary, type of intervention, focused on students' representation of their educational goal at a given place within their hierarchical goal structure. For students who want to develop their commitment, such an intervention could be aimed at working on the abstraction and integration dimensions of their goal representation.



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- intentions and actions. One of the reasons for this gap between an expressed willingness to perform a behavior and its actual performance is that people base their intentions on beliefs about the behavior that are more favorable in the hypothetical situation than in the real situation (Ajzen, Brown, & Carvajal, 2004).
- Note 1. Although goal commitment has been shown to positively predict behaviors favorable to goal achievement (e.g., Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007; Pomerantz, Saxon, & Oishi, 2000), discrepancy is also likely to appear between



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