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Front Cover Art Design created by David Merkuratsuk. David is a post secondary student in his 2nd year of a 4 year degree in Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland. David is from Nain, Labrador and remembers his love of art going back to grade 2.

The Inukshuk... *"These magnificent Stone Cairns show that you should always have hope in where to go because they are the leaders that lead the way to safety which brings food, shelter, and life. All the years that I have been traveling through the barrens, I have always been amazed how these Inukshuks can bring you to your destination and they ask nothing in return."*

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Number 2

EDITORIAL

ARTICLES

Career Planning and Development for Students: Building a Career in a Professional Practice Discipline

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"Never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often the mustard seed germinates and roots itself"
Florence Nightingale

Nurses assume a variety of roles in complex and ever changing health care systems. Moreover, the increasing demands of current work environments require that nurses be well prepared to provide and influence quality health care services. Nurse educators, therefore, are faced with the challenge of creating curricula that prepare and socialize students to take an active role in the evolution of their individual nursing careers as well as help shape the future of the profession.

Changing professional practice environments offer students tremendous opportunities along with significant challenges. To achieve success in the current work environment students must become career resilient and self-directed. Career resilient workers are dedicated to the concept of continuous learning, are ready to adapt and grow in order to keep pace with change, assume responsibility for developing their career, and are committed to both the their own success and that of the organization in which they work (Donner & Wheeler, 2004; Waterman, Waterman, & Collard, 1994). Career resilience is congruent with the definitions of nursing practice that include autonomy, self-direction and continuous learning. Developing the skills and professional attitude necessary for career resilience is a process that students should begin in the first year of their nursing education.

Career planning and development is a dynamic process that adapts to the changes students' experience as they build their professional knowledge, experience, and identity. Fundamental to the career planning and development process is self-discovery. The individual engages in a self-assessment process that requires ongoing examination of personal values, within the context of one's nursing education and the professional environment. Clark (1997) describes this process as "self-concept and identity formation" (p.8). Active and structured participation in self-discovery can assist students to reflect on their growing professional values and attitudes and to learn and refine skills that will allow them to successfully and confidently participate in a formidable work environment at the outset and throughout stages of their career. The confidence that accompanies affirmation of the value of professional strengths has the potential to enhance and reinforce students' sense of self-efficacy related to their academic and professional career choices.

The purposes of this article are twofold: to convince academics to participate in formal career planning and development activities with their students, and to report on research about a student-focused career planning and development intervention program for student nurses.

Student Career Planning and Development Needs

Students' career planning needs have long been neglected in nursing education curriculum development. Consequently, students embark on their nursing careers with little knowledge of how they might position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities available to them (Marsland, l995). Marsland emphasized that for nursing students to achieve their maximum potential, they need expert assistance in their efforts to make career decisions. Yet currently, career planning and development activities are concentrated in the final months before graduation and usually focus on how to prepare for getting a first job (e.g., interviewing skills, resume writing) rather than on developing the skills and perspective necessary to comprehensively plan throughout all the stages of one's career.

Little is understood about how students, particularly those in undergraduate nursing programs, can participate in their nursing education in a way that will prepare them to assume responsibility for their academic and career paths. Nursing education programs have been criticized for continuing to focus on clinical skill development without guiding students in how to develop the career planning skills necessary to optimize those clinical skills within the health care delivery system (Donner, 1993).

The existing literature further suggests that nursing faculties and curricula lack the dedicated expertise, time, and content necessary to adequately prepare students for career success in the current health care environment. Crofts (1992) studied the career guidance needs and experiences of second- and third-year nursing students from four colleges of nursing. Of the 90 students who responded to Crofts' questionnaire, less than 50% indicated that they had discussed their career plans

with someone, and only 12% had been offered any career advice. Students identified nursing faculty as resources whom they would be most likely to approach for career advice. However, the majority of faculty members who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they had never received career guidance and did not feel confident to provide it to students.

Marsland (1995) conducted a survey focused on career guidance offered to students and guidance that students claimed to desire but did not receive. Interview data indicated that new graduates felt that they received little career guidance over the course of their nursing education, which left them with a sense of being ill-prepared to establish themselves in their chosen career. Students expressed concerns related to their ability to develop a career path or execute their career goals in a challenging health care system. Marsland's results indicated that the majority of students wanted, and on an ad hoc basis received, some help with how to obtain a nursing job. Fewer received guidance about how they might gain experience related to their future career goals. Students also indicated that they wanted information and guidance in the area of career planning.

Nursing education programs have a responsibility to prepare students to create meaningful careers with confidence and enthusiasm. Fowler Byers and Bellack (2001) maintained that for nursing education programs to remain responsive to a changing health care system, curricular content and educational processes must include innovative straetgies designed to enhance nursing students' performance and the development of their professionalism. Secrest, Norwood and Keatley (2003) suggest that the inclusion of reflection on professionalism in nursing curricula is equally important to the knowledge and skills also included. It is through their education experiences that nursing students form their professional identities, examine their values and learn the norms of professional practice (Clark, 1997).

Socialization into the profession is an interactive process whereby professional identities are founded on values, meanings and norms that students adopt throughout their educational programs (Clark, 1997; Thorpe & Loo, 2003). The formation of professional identity is a developmental process (Clark, 1997). Individuals come to know themselves within their profession by reflecting on experiences, finding meaning in these experiences and incorporating this meaning into their professional being (Smith, 1992). The discovery of professional meaning can be fostered through the integration of career planning and development education and skill development throughout nursing curricula. Nursing education programs are in a prime position to initiate and sustain students' career planning and development skills. The academic environment offers unlimited opportunities for professional role modelling of attributes related to career resilience. Establishing career planning and development as a priority in nursing education can serve to ensure that students are both socialized, and offered the tools and resources to achieve, professional success throughout their nursing career.

Student Career Planning and Development Study

A pilot study examining the effectiveness of a career planning and development program that used a modified version of Donner and Wheeler's career planning model (Donner, 1998, see Table 1) was conducted at an urban Canadian university. The overall goal of the two-phased randomized control study was to examine the impact of a student-focused career planning and development program on the student nurse outcomes of involvement in career planning activities and perceived confidence related to career decision making. Study objectives included assessing (a) within and between group differences in career decision-making self-efficacy following the introduction, and participation in, a student-focused career planning and development program; (b) within and between group differences in the degree to which students were engaged in career planning and development activities; and (c) student nurses' perceptions of the role that career planning and development would play both during their academic nursing program and in their future professional nursing practice.

Methodology

A randomized control study design with a focus group component was utilized to examine quantitative and qualitative differences between and within intervention and control groups in terms of career decision-making efficacy and career planning activities. The research study was approved by the university ethics review board at the study site.

Data Collection

Sample

Randomly selected students from the second and third years of a basic baccalaureate nursing program located in an urban university were invited to participate in the career planning and development study. The self-selected participants from the initial randomized group were then randomly assigned to control or intervention groups. The study sample ranged in age between 20 and 40 years. The highest level of education achieved before entering the nursing program ranged from high school to second year of university preparation. The majority of participants reported that they had little, or no, experience using a career planning and development model.

Study Instruments

The quantitative data collection questionnaire included the Career Planning Activities Measure and the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale–short form (CDMSES). Wheeler, Waddell, Donner and McGillis Hall developed the Career Planning Activities Measure in 2001. It is a measure of the activities that each participant has undertaken related to career planning as outlined in the four stages of the Donner and Wheeler's (Donner, 1998) model: scanning, assessing, visioning, and planning. A summative score is created for each participant within each of the four stages of the model. A high score indicates a higher degree of CPDP career planning activities. The Career Planning Activities Measure has been used in two previous studies of career planning and development with nurses with reported Cronbach alphas of .62-.94 with community health nurses and .66-.92 with

registered nurses in an acute care setting. Cronbach's alpha was .69-.81 in this study.

The Career Decision- Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983) measures students' perceived level of confidence related to career decision making. It contains six dimensions on a 10-point scale where participants are asked to indicate their perceived confidence in accomplishing different tasks necessary to make quality career decisions. Cronbach's alpha has been reported as .97 (Taylor & Betz), and .80 in this study.

The researchers developed a demographic data sheet that obtained data related to selected demographic characteristics such as work-related information, educational preparation, and involvement in career development activities.

Phase One

In Phase One of the study during the fall of the 1999/2000 academic year, the intervention group included 14 students, 6 in the second and 8 in the third year of their nursing program. Thirteen of these students were female and one was male. In a three-hour workshop, the intervention group was introduced to Donner and Wheeler's (Donner, l998) career planning and development model, which was adapted for use with nursing students. Due to conflicting academic and clinical practice demands, the intervention workshops were run on two separate occasions, with the participants choosing the one that best fit their schedule. The intervention group completed the study questionnaire before beginning the workshop and within 2 weeks of completing it. Each participant received a career planning and development book in addition to a student career planning and development workbook folder.

The control group consisted of 11 students, 5 in the second year of the program and 6 in the third year. Control group members did not participate in the career planning and development workshops. They completed the study questionnaire on an individual basis within the same time period as the intervention group. Control group members were informed that they would be offered a comprehensive

career planning and development workshop at the completion of Phase Two of the study, scheduled for March, 2001. At that time, control group participants also received a career planning and development book with a student career planning and development workbook folder.

Phase Two

All participants in Phase One were invited to continue their involvement in Phase Two, with the understanding that participants would remain in the group (intervention/control) to which they were originally randomly assigned. Of the 25 original participants, 5 students dropped out of the study citing academic and family life demands. The remaining 20 participants (10 in each group) requested to continue their study involvement for the 2000/2001 academic year. Both the intervention and control groups contained 4 third-year students and 6 fourth-year students.

The Phase Two intervention included two 3-hour working sessions in which the career planning and development model introduced in Phase One was explored in further depth and applied to the intervention group's current academic setting and professional experiences. Although individual career coaching was also offered to the intervention group members, none of them requested it during the course of the study. After the end of the project and the academic term, however, 5 of the 10 (3 third-year and 2 fourth-year students) intervention group participants asked for, and received, individual coaching.

The instruments used in Phase One were administered to all study participants immediately before the Phase Two intervention workshops and up to one month after them. All students in the intervention group completed an evaluation form assessing their perceptions of the career planning and development program following the workshops in both phases of the study.

Focus Groups

All control and intervention group members were invited to participate in a focus group as a means of validating the quantitative study findings and further discovering and understanding the

students' personal perception of, and experience with, the career planning and development process. Focus group participants were paid a $35.00 honorarium. Separate focus groups were conducted for the intervention and control groups. Four students from the intervention group and three from the control group participated in the focus group discussions. They were moderated by the project research assistant, lasted for 1 1/2 hours, and were tape-recorded. Participants in both intervention and control groups were asked the following questions:
1. What does career planning and development mean to you?
2. How would you describe your experience with career planning and development?
3. How and where do you think career planning and development fits with your nursing education?
4. Where do you see career planning and development fitting with your professional nursing practice?

Data Analysis

Participant questionnaire responses yielded numerical data that were coded and entered into a statistical software program, SPSS, for analysis. All Phase One and Two participants completed and returned their questionnaires. *T*-tests were used to determine between and within group differences between the intervention and control groups on questionnaire items.

All focus group discussions were audio taped and each audio-tape was transcribed by the project research assistant. The qualitative approach to the focus groups and related data analysis was phenomenology. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber's (1998) steps of data analysis were followed to arrive at the final synthesis of the participants' lived experience. The audio-tapes were reviewed twice to ensure transcription accuracy. Using the guiding questions posed in the focus groups, the research assistant then comprehensively read and analyzed the transcripts to determine and categorize major themes. Significant phrases were identified and the central meaning of participants' responses was paraphrased as a theme. A theme was identified if it was discussed by a majority of the focus group

participants. The principal investigator followed the initial review and identification of themes with a blind review, which yielded a final synthesis congruent with that of the research assistant. Themes were grouped under the focus group questions to determine how the data answered the question and to categorize the pertinent findings for both the intervention and control groups.

Results

Questionnaire Data

Between Group Differences

No significant differences in career planning activities and career decision-making were found between the control and intervention groups before the career planning and development program intervention was introduced. After Phase One, the intervention group, compared to the control group, had significantly higher scores on both the Career Planning Activities Measure and CDMSES (see Table 2). The only area in which there was not a significant group difference was on the self-assessment scale of the Career Planning Activities Measure. This scale measures the degree to which individuals engage in an assessment of their personal and professional strengths and limitations, an exercise common to clinical course requirements in all years of the basic baccalaureate program at the institution in which the study was conducted.

In contrast, the only significant between group difference that emerged post-intervention in Phase Two was found in the strategic career planning scale of the Career Activities Measure (see Table 3). This scale measures the extent to which individuals have a documented and specific career plan for the next 6 months.

Within Group Differences

The intervention group had significant increases in the degree of career planning activity and the level of career decision-making self-efficacy from pre- to post-test in both phases of the study (see Table 4 and 5). In contrast, the control group's scores in career planning activity scores did not change significantly from pre- to post-questionnaire in Phase One. However, their scores did increase on the self-efficacy scale on the post-test in Phase One. In the study's second phase, there were no significant changes between the control group pre- and post-test scores in either career planning activities or career decision-making self-efficacy.

Summary

Compared to the control group, students who participated in a student-focused career planning and development program achieved significantly higher scores on both career-planning activities and career decision-making self-efficacy measures in the second and third years of their nursing program. After participating in Phase Two of the study during the third and fourth years of their nursing program, these same students did not score significantly higher than the control group on either measure, with the exception of active career planning. In terms of within group differences, the intervention group had significantly higher career activity and self-efficacy scores following participation in the career planning and development program in both phases of the study, whereas post-intervention in Phase Two, the control group did not maintain the significant increase in self-efficacy score they achieved in Phase One.

Focus Group Data

Both intervention and control group participant responses to the four questions guiding the focus groups were reviewed and analyzed for common themes. The four main categories of themes derived from the data were: 1) The meaning of career planning and development, 2) Experience with career planning and development, 3) The fit between career planning and development and nursing education and 4) The fit between career planning and development and professional nursing practice. The themes that have been included under each of these categories are presented individually and supported by participants' quotes that are representative of the identified themes. These are presented in the for the control and intervention groups, respectively.

1) *The Meaning of Career Planning and Development*

Control Group

Employment/health care system drives career planning and development

[Career planning means] starting from graduation, planning from your first job, finding out what you like early and using your jobs to get your goals.

It [career planning] is focusing on different types of careers in nursing, different types of nursing.

[Career planning is] looking at the trends in a particular field and seeing where you fit.

Intervention Group

Individual values drive career planning and development

. It's [career planning is] taking your values and using them to formulate a plan that you can use, step-by-step.

Assuming control of one's career

It's [career planning] taking ownership of your career, your future, and making it what you want it to be, rather than feeling adrift

2) *Experience With Career Planning and Development*

Control Group

Searching

I've gone to job fairs in my 4th year, more career searching and job searching.

I had different kinds of testing at a career centre where they had different types of tests that were quite extensive and they asked you questions about your preferences and those kinds of things.

CNSA conferences, just talking with people that may help me focus.

Intervention Group

Empowerment

This is the first time in my program that I have someone really talk to me about what I want, what is important to me, and where I see myself going. I feel empowered to take charge of my career. I feel stronger about standing up for myself and for what I want to do.

Before being involved in the workshops, I did not even know that you could improve your skills in career development. I figured that as soon as you choose what you want to do, you go to school to do that thing and it just happens. I have learned that I can develop my career while in school – I know how to do that now.

I have a goal that I am confident about, and opportunities that can help me reach that goal seem to jump out more and I am able to take those opportunities and use them.

3) *The Fit Between Career Planning and Development and Nursing Education*

Control Group

Lack of career planning and development information and support

We need more focus on different nursing careers – beginning in first year we could have workshops and seminars on different types of nursing so that people could get a feel for some other types of nursing so maybe, by fourth year they would make different choices as far as clinical placements.

There should be faculty who are dedicated to career planning, otherwise it really depends on what your exposure is, you might know a lot of people, or you might lose out on a perfect resource person.

You kind of need an expert, someone who is interested in helping you who is also an expert in the area, it can't be just anyone.

Career planning needs to be lead by someone who knows what they are doing, and not just by reading off of a sheet, or giving advice based on their experiences.

Intervention Group

Need for early and ongoing inclusion of career planning and development into nursing curricula

Career planning needs to be part of our education process right from the get go. You need a consciousness of where each experience is taking you, or you flounder, in the early years you don't have a sense of where your path is leading you, you flounder.

As my values and goals continuously change throughout the nursing program, career planning and development should be included in all levels of the program.

4) *Fit Between Career Planning and Development and Professional Practice*

Control Group

Uncertainty

I am going into left field until I find out what I really want to do, and that may be a few years, I don't know, maybe I can get my plan together and then I'll be on my way, prior to that I'll still be searching I guess.

I really do not have a plan. I want to learn more as to how actually to make a plan and to see where I am going 'cause you know that is one of the things I'm a little perturbed about 'cause in order to get anywhere you need to make a plan. I feel like I am going in circles, I feel like there are many things that I am interested in but where am I going?

Intervention Group

Personal control and direction

It will help me to just keep opening doors and not getting stuck anywhere – constantly looking ahead and beyond of what is directly in front of me – I am more goal directed.

It helps you to turn things around…you see how the learning fits for me not others.

Discussion

This pilot study examined the effect of a career planning and development program on student nurse outcomes. Given the small number of participants in the pilot project, and the single study site, results cannot be generalized beyond the pilot sample, however, findings do provide insights and directions for further research and curriculum development.

Findings suggest that students who participated in an introductory student-focused career planning and development program in the earlier years of their nursing baccalaureate education (early fall of their second and third years) were significantly more active in the process of career planning and development, and reported greater confidence in their ability to make career-related decisions than those who did not participate in such a program at that stage of their nursing education. These initial findings lend support to the contention that introducing a career planning and development program early within nursing academic programs can provide students with needed tools and guidance so that they may confidently assume responsibility for relevant and timely career-related initiatives. Participation in a career planning and development process offered study participants a structured and continuous process though which they could reflect on their evolving professional self and identify what they need to progress toward their vision of the nurse they wish to be.

The lack of between group differences following Phase Two of the study, when participants were in the late fall of the third and fourth year of their academic program, was initially somewhat puzzling. Since the intervention students were much more intensely involved in all phases of the career planning and development program in Phase Two, it was expected that the significant differences found following the first phase would be maintained after the second . But when the context of the students' academic experience at the time of Phase Two was examined, it became apparent that some activities and events may have contributed to the non-significant between group findings after the second phase. Sixty percent of both intervention and control group participants were in the final year of their baccalaureate nursing education. In the fall of the fourth year, a plethora of job fairs are held both within the School of Nursing at the institution in which the study was conducted and external to the academic setting. Moreover, the fourth year students are given clinical credit for attending a fall provincial job fair sponsored by the nursing professional organization. Resume and interviewing workshops are also offered at this time of year for

third and fourth year students. In addition, fourth-year students are required to take a "Nursing Issues and Trends" course in the fall term that focuses on enhancing the senior nursing students' awareness of the health care system and involvement in professional activities. Overall, there is a strong focus on preparing to graduate within the academic, clinical, and broader professional arenas.

Of interest, the intervention group demonstrated consistent increases in career planning activities and confidence in career decision-making self-efficacy over both Phase One and Phase Two of the study. But the control group's career decision-making self-efficacy score increased only following the first phase, with no significant change in scores in Phase Two. It may be that, given the flurry of events in the fall related to graduation, the control group members participated more actively in some career-related activities. However, they did not maintain this level of active involvement once they secured a job.

Self-selection into the study, the effects of study participation, and student maturity over the course of the study are also factors to take into account when interpreting the findings. A further consideration is the students' differing perspectives on the nature of career planning. The focus group discussions broadly suggested that students who had not participated in a career planning and development program perceived career planning as those activities necessary to secure a job at graduation (i.e., attending job fairs, exploring the different types of available nursing roles, and determining what employment options their current skill level would permit). At the time of this study, such activities were abundant and easily accessible. Moreover, the students in this study were entering the nursing workforce at a time of shortage and were, in most cases, confident that they would have a job after they graduated. Yet in spite of this security, control group discussion participants expressed the theme of "feeling adrift" regarding their professional future, and of needing direction and assistance in formulating a plan for their career.

The nature of support offered to graduating students by the School of Nursing appeared to convey a valuing of the "doing of nursing" through the achievement of employment. Donner and Wheeler (2004) suggest that a career in nursing is "about being a nurse, not doing nursing" (p.29). The distinction lies in the belief that being a nurse is imbedded in who we are as individuals and the values, beliefs, interests and knowledge that we hold in both our professional and personal lives whereas the doing of nursing focuses on the work to be accomplished (Donner & Wheeler, 2004).

In contrast to the focus on searching for and obtaining a job, those in the intervention group discussion seemed to place a broader emphasis on the relevance of values in guiding both short- and long-term career choices. They also expressed a sense of empowerment from having a process to use for career planning, as well as a sense of confidence in their ability to plan and control their career over time. The cornerstone of the career planning and development process is the discovery of self within the context of nursing. Smith (1992) defines this knowing in nursing as a "holistic and integrative process of making sense out of ourselves in the world..it is weaving the threads of conceptions, perceptions, remembrances and reflections into a fabric of meaning" (p.1). Secrest, Norwood and Keatley (2003) propose that knowing in nursing enhances students' confidence, competence and sense of professional worth. Structured curricular activities that incorporate reflection on professionalism may serve to socialize students to value both the achievement of professional knowledge and skills and the creation of a meaningful nursing career.

Both groups identified the need to have dedicated, expert career planning and development resources formally integrated into the nursing education curriculum, beginning in the early years of the program. The nature of the need for support differed between the control and intervention groups. Control group participants expressed a desire to have information presented to them with respect to nursing careers and experts who could help them with their career.

Participants in the intervention group spoke to the need for a process to be introduced into their education experience that would enable them to reflect on, and respond to their expanding experiences and their changing values and goals. Although both groups highlighted a need for greater support related to career planning and development, it would seem that the control group sought direction from those who were perceived as authorities whereas intervention group participants needed a structure though which they could assimilate new experiences into their career planning and development.

Conclusion

Lack of education about the process of career planning and development during baccalaureate nursing education was an issue for the student participants in this pilot study. Study findings suggest that providing formal guidance in this process makes a difference in the degree to which students confidently participate in goal-directed career planning activities. Educational initiatives targeted to students' individual and collective career planning and development needs can convey a valuing of the importance of the self within one's career and help them to assume responsibility for their nursing career throughout the course of their academic program and their nursing career (Donner & Wheeler, 2000). Education programs have a responsibility to prepare students to capitalize on change and create their careers with assurance and enthusiasm. Integrating career planning and development education throughout academic program curricula may be one means of ensuring that students are offered the tools and resources to be active and confident in their ability to achieve professional success in rapidly changing employment environments rife with opportunities rather than certainties. The ability to be career resilient within one's academic and professional career has the potential to build capacity within the profession (Donner & Wheeler, 2004.

The results of this pilot study provide educators with direction for future research. Intervention and longitudinal research with students across years of nursing curricula and academic settings

would provide further information about students' needs and how the career planning and development process contributes to their perceived professional success and career satisfaction.

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Table 1

Career Planning and Development Model (Donner, 1998)

Phase	Description of phases and process
Scanning your environment	-Foundation of career-planning process -Activity to become better informed and see the world through differing perspectives -Taking stock of the world in which you live -Understanding current realities in your country, health care system, and work environment as well as future trends at global, national, and local levels within and outside of health care and the nursing profession.
Self-assessment and reality check	-Identifying your values, experiences knowledge, strengths and limitations -Key to exploring new opportunities -Together with environmental scan helps you to identify future directions -Reality check allows you to seek validation of your self-assessment and expand your view of yourself.
Creating your career vision	-Exploring possibilities guided by your environmental scan and self-assessment -Vision of your potential future -Focus on what is possible and realistic for you in both the short- and long-term -Link between who you are and who you can become.
Strategic career plan	-Formulating a blueprint for action -Specifying the activities, timespan and resources you need to help you achieve your goals and career vision.

Table 2

Phase One Post-Test Between Group Differences on Career Planning Activities Measure and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale

Scales	Means		t	p
	Int.	Control		
Scanning the environment	40.8	34.6	2.25	034*
Self-assessment	29.8	28.1	1.16	.258
Career vision	42.1	34.5	2.83	.009**
Strategic career planning	7.1	5.4	2.50	.01**
Career decision-making self-efficacy	105.2	89.5	2.86	.009**

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Table 3

Phase Two Post-Test Between Group Differences on Career Planning Activities Measure and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale

Scales	Means		t	p
	Int.	Control		
Scanning the environment	44.1	43.4	.378	.710
Self-assessment	32.6	31.4	.988	.336
Career vision	44.3	41.1	1.19	.251
Strategic career planning	8.3	6.8	3.05	007**
Career decision-making self-efficacy	112.0	110.4	.193	.849

**p<.01

Table 4

Phase One Pre-Post Test Within Group Differences on Career Planning Activities Measure and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale

Scales	Intervention Group Mean difference	*t*	*p*	Control Group Mean difference	*t*	*p*
Scanning the environment	37.4-40.8	3.30	.008**	32.8-34.6	1.85	.087
Self-assessment	28.8-28.6	1.07	.310	28.1-27.6	.729	.479
Career vision	37.0-42.2	2.31	.04*	31.4-34.5	1.19	.068
Strategic career planning	5.4-7.1	3.01	.01**	5.4-6.8	1.95	.073
Career decision-making self-efficacy	87.4-105.8	4.09	.002**	82.8-89.5	2.83	.014**

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Table 5

Phase Two Pre-Post Test Within Group Differences on Career Planning Activities Measure and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale

Scales	Intervention Group Mean difference	*t*	*p*	Control Group Mean difference	*t*	*p*
Scanning the environment	42.6-44.1	1.53	.160	40.9-43.4	1.790	.106
Self-assessment	29.4-32.6	3.73	.005**	30.8-31.4	0.620	.551
Career vision	40.2-44.3	2.51	.034*	38.4-41.1	1.620	.140
Strategic career planning	6.9-8.3	2.26	.050*	6.3-6.8	1.340	.213
Career decision-making self-efficacy	99.7-112	3.02	.015*	95.9-110.4	0.149	.170

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Relentless Accountabilities and Co-'authoring' our Professional Lives

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Abstract

This article summarizes activities from a workshop on the career development of counsellors. The perspective taken is borrowed from narrative psychology and therapy, and the workshop's activities are seen as "re-authoring" opportunities. These opportunities arise from questions, answered in pairs, designed to promote reflection and decision-making on aspects of practice germane to experienced counsellors. Counselling is portrayed as a profession where we are expected to balance accountabilities, including those we have to ourselves, and our most important non-work relationships. Narrating the story of our professional life is therefore one in which our 'authorship' in all areas of accountability is required.

This article is targeted at veteran counsellors, though those new to the field might be interested by the issues and questions raised. The primary question I raise here is: What does it mean to practice accountably these days while remaining accountable to our personal, family and community lives? Counselling is a career one can easily get lost in because the demands are so great, and our energies so finite. So, in the article which follows I ask you to join me in exploring issues which are part of the great balancing act of meeting our work and professional obligations, staying motivated to that work, and seeing that our relationships (to ourselves and others who matter to us) remain healthy. I raise and invite your reflection on elements of this balancing act with the hope that you can constructively use such reflection to further guide you in your career and personal development as counsellors. The outcomes of this reflection could reaffirm your relationships to your present balancing act, or possibly nudge you to achieve a more personally satisfying balance of the professional and personal in your life.

Balancing accountabilities

Frontline practice in counselling has never carried a greater weight of accountability. A combination of developments has brought this on but practicing as a counsellor has come to mean doing more in less time, with greater scrutiny than formerly was the case (Johnson, 1995). Our professional bodies expect adherence to increasingly detailed codes of ethics and conduct, not the least of which is the trend toward stricter adherence to empirically validated treatments and diagnostic procedures. Laws and legal judgments affecting how we counsel convey a sense that we practice in a minefield where seemingly innocent missteps can easily result in grave professional consequences. Our clients are increasingly more consumer-savvy, bringing internet-researched understandings of their concerns and what to do about them while expecting collaboration in areas formerly considered by many as our prerogative. The service contexts where we practice feel the squeeze of greater accountability, too, passing on to us what clients, funders and other partners in delivering counselling services expect of them. New intervention methods and research findings proliferate making it impossible to comprehensively stay on top of all developments within our profession. And, this is all before we factor in the personal and relational dimensions of being a counsellor. Buffeted by these competing aspirations and expectations, defining oneself as a counsellor has never been more challenging. Already a high burnout profession, we face what most workplace stress researchers know: there's a slippery slope between losing influence over the nature of our work, and burn-out (Grosch & Olsen, 1994).

Even the word *accountability* might leave some of you cringing as it carries with it connotations of yet more obligation and scrutiny. The purpose of this paper and its reported activities is to revisit what it means to define our roles in the face of all that pulls on us personally and professionally. Behind it is a rationale: we can become better authors of our own experience when we resist being 'authored' *by* our experiences.

Method

This article is based on a workshop designed to help counselling professionals re-connect with their intentions, commitments, values, professional and personal relationships, and the *place* counselling occupies within their lifestyle. The guiding ideas behind the workshop are narrative and social constructionist, assuming that the meanings we live by are constructed primarily through social interaction (Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1999; McNamee & Gergen, 1999). Cumulatively, these interactions help us make sense of our experiences, usually in story form. But, we are not passive in our personal stories; we author and narrate them in relating to our social experiences, making use of the plausible understandings available to us. From this perspective, the workshop, like similar others (e.g., Strong, 1997), aims to engage participants in speaking in novel ways about their experience, inviting them to relate to (and possibly alter) their personal narratives of experience in new and preferred ways. It is because our stories gain their significance in the sharing (Newman & Holzman, 1999) that I facilitate workshop experiences that are primarily interactive, using questions to promote unfamiliar perspectives and discussions. While on one hand I believe that a coherent personal story of experience can be a valuable, touchstone resource, I am also wary of the

potential of some stories to cohere and conserve problematic understandings (Newman, 2000; White & Epston, 1990). For example, a counsellor may feel stuck in a constricted or 'stale-dated' story of their career; or, conversely, they may find their counselling story one which promotes creativity and resilience in meeting relentless professional challenges. So, the activities of this workshop offer participants opportunities to bring greater clarity and coherence to their personal stories of being counsellors, while affording possibilities to revise those stories as the questions invite them to speak from new perspectives.

If we want to consider our careers stories we live (Cochran & Savickas, 1997), it helps to be living them according to preferred plotlines (Eron & Lund, 1996). Of course, these stories are not solely our creation; they have many co-authors, so to speak. Our career stories are, in effect, as much negotiated as co-authored, because to live them means to see how they fare as we take them into our counselling and other life experiences and relationships. Most experienced counsellors can point to developments where relationships and particular experiences became wanted or unwanted *co-authors*. Counselling is a profession where sometimes our cumulative professional experience can develop into a story Ram Dass (Dass & Gorman, 1985) once referred to as "the helper's prison". Regardless, the workshop invites participants to reflect on, and share different perspectives, to further the possibilities that we live preferred career stories. To gain, optimally, from the exercises/questions that follow (you will also see them as appendices at the end of the article), find two conversational partners with whom you can discuss your answers: a fellow counsellor, and a trusted non-counsellor friend or family member. Simply reading, and reflecting on the answers will not have the same effect.

Our relationship with our intentions

The story behind how we chose to be counsellors can feel like a faint recollection, as we become veterans in our field. But, behind any commitment to something as demanding as a career are our intentions. Lose sight of them, and we can feel we're living, to paraphrase Peter Hansen (1985), other peoples' stories for our lives. As with any long-term endeavour (e.g., a marriage, having children), however, our intentions change over time. As our motivations in becoming counsellors meet the demands of front-line practice, new motivations emerge while others recede in terms of personal significance. Many of us entered counselling with a starry-eyed-change-the-world enthusiasm and if our subsequent experiences didn't make us cynics, we learned to scale back our hopes and expectations. We may have had career-changing experiences in the course of our practice, as we worked with new populations, found new approaches to practice, or took on roles beyond the consulting room. As our personal lives changed; so possibly changed the centrality of career to our personal identity, and the importance we placed on family and community. Some of us will have been counselling clients ourselves, prompting previously unthought of questions regarding what we do. Worse, as narrative therapist Michael White (1997) highlighted, our intentions in being counsellors are often pathologized by media characterizations of our professional personalities (see "What about Bob" or "The Prince of Tides"), implying that we use our work to address our personal shortcomings.

Like ships blown off course it is possible that we no longer feel guided by our intentional compass as our career pulls us forward with its many demands. In this initial part of the workshop participants are asked to revisit their *relationship* with their intentions. This wording might seem unusual: do we have intentions or do we relate to them? My answer is that both apply. While we may claim something as an intention, what we do with it later – our relationship to it in guiding our actions – can be an entirely different matter. Our intentions are our personal constructions of what matters to us; how we relate to them as potential resources in going forward is the concern here. In solution-focused therapy talk, living by our intentions is living "on track" (Walter & Peller, 1992).

So, early in the workshop attention is given to articulating intentions and exploring the relationships participants have with them as resources in leading a preferred life.

Questions

The questions that follow are intended for counsellors to use in dyads at the workshop. In one sense, the presuppositions of these questions *invite* counsellors to articulate and clarify their seldom-considered professional intentions. In another way, sharing their answers to such questions with others, for some narrative theorists (e.g., Holstein & Gubrium, 2000), can help people affirm and commit to what they "talk into being". So, these questions are meant to engage counsellor participants in the workshop in reflective processes they make public to at least one professional colleague. Inviting people into such a metacognitive stance (e.g., Flavell, 1977) on their practice of counselling, and their motivations for it, via such discussions, can itself be an empowering experience. The discussions also hold the potential to articulate change-promoting beliefs, a key feature in Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross' (1992) stages of change model. Since the counsellor participants' audience is another counsellor skilled in helping people articulate often-difficult ideas and feelings, listening is usually anything but passive. Roles are exchanged with each party taking up being a listener and speaker, taking turns interviewing or being interviewed from questions like those that follow:

1) What initially motivated you to become a counsellor?
2) What are the primary intentions you bring to counselling now?
3) If these changed between starting as a counsellor and now, what prompted the change?
4) In reflecting on your interactions with clients and peers, where do you feel your intentions best show through in those interactions? Illustrate with examples.
5) What challenges do you face in keeping "on track" with your intentions? How can you rise to those challenges and still feel "on track"?

6) What has your relationship with your career intentions been like as you've faced the different challenges in being a counsellor? In other words, have your intentions been as much of a source of guidance and inspiration in your work as you would like? Explain.

7) In the long-run, what will tell you that you have practiced and lived in ways that have you feeling you've kept 'in sync' with your intentions?

As mentioned earlier, social constructionists see meanings gaining their significance in relationships through "objectivizing" what is discussed, crystallizing ideas into meaningful words that can be revisited in future thinking or conversations (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). Narrative therapists, in particular (e.g., Epston, 1994; Strong & Flynn, 2000), consider documentation as a resource capable of furthering preferred stories, so the "interviewers" are also asked to be "documenters" of responses that their interviewees consider noteworthy. In this way, each respondent may complete the workshop with notes useful for further reflection.

Our relationship with counselling

Michael Sussman (1995) called ours "a perilous calling". Whether we consider the contexts in which we practice, the nature of our clients and their presenting concerns, the increasingly prescriptive and litigation-fraught professionalism to which we are bound, or the administrative and collegial aspects of our work, we serve many 'masters' where the stakes are often high. Family therapist, Jay Haley (1987), considered relationships potentially 'crazy-making' (double binds) if we can't influence them where this matters to us. Yet, the average counsellor practices in hierarchical circumstances where they have little influence over how they practice. In an era where healthcare services are increasingly rationed, when the pressures on us to produce outcomes are reinforced with micro-managerial strategies that one writer likened to having "big brother in the consulting room" (Wylie, 1994), the push for accountability in our work has never been greater (Johnson, 1995). And, this is before we factor in the intense feelings we work with that some researcher-clinicians feel contribute to "compassion fatigue" or burnout, two potential occupational hazards of counselling (e.g., Figley, 1995; Grosch & Olsen, 1994).

While there are day in day out vagaries in our work, when we generalize our counselling experience it can be understood as a story with a seeming trajectory. This story connotes a relationship we have with our work and professional identity. But it has many co-authors, and to the extent possible the workshop aims to engage participants as authors/editors-in-chief of their professional stories. We can become alienated from our own experience when this capacity and influence diminishes for us (Newman & Holzman, 1997) so the workshop aims to reconnect participants with novel ways of construing, and acting within, their roles and circumstances. Characterizing counselling as something we have a relationship to, can feel initially awkward for participants. Consistent with a narrative therapy approach, the view shared here is that we can *externalize* aspects of our experience we consider intrinsic to who we are such as our professional identity. One imaginative twist on this concept involves interviewing one person in a relationship, requesting them to speak *as if* they could accurately and faithfully represent how their partner would want to be heard (Epston, 1993, Snyder, 1995). In this workshop, however, participants are asked to go one step further: the counsellor's professional identity itself is interviewed, as if it could give feedback on the relationship the counsellor has with 'it'. In this sense, the interviewer asks the interviewee to speak as if s/he *was* her/his professional identity with 'its' own voice. A related example, from the externalizing practices of narrative therapy, is to request to speak to a client's temper, as if that temper had its own personality (see Epston, 1992). The conceptual separation of the person from an influential aspect of her/him permits novel forms of reflection. Such exercises are also commonplace for those familiar with psychodrama (e.g., Blatner & Blatner, 1997), and in my experience most participants easily orient to them after some initial clarification of instructions. These kinds of questions come up late in the next series of questions. Again, in pairs, participants are asked to take turns as interviewers/documenters and interviewees.

Questions

1) What are key factors, other than those you (as your professional identity) bring to counselling, that influence how you practice? To what extent have these come to define your practice? Explain.

2) Share your views on what it means to practice accountably. Be sure to include personal views as well as those from your employer, clients and professional organizations. Describe your experience in trying to reconcile these views.

3) Identify those factors that most support AND most erode the quality of your relationship with counselling.

4) When do you feel your relationship with counselling is at its best? What specifically occurs then that makes your relationship with counselling feel at its best?

5) Here you are asked to imaginatively separate *you* the person from *you* the counsellor. Then, please give feedback to you the person in answering the following: a) what are the most important qualities that *s/he* (i.e., you the person) brings to counselling? b) how would you characterize the present relationship *you* the counsellor have with *you* the person? c) what does the counsellor in you need most from *him/her*?

6) Continuing on in this manner, but reversing roles so that *you* the person are in the 'hot seat': a) what experiences does *s/he* (the counsellor) bring to your life that you most/least appreciate? b) how would you characterize the present relationship you have with *him/her*? c) what do you most need from *him/her* to live a preferred life?

Clearly, these are unusual questions, but when effective, they draw participants into examining new perspectives on their professional and personal lives. Characterizing ourselves as having a relationship to our practice can help us stand back from it and assess how it is, and how we would like it to be. In the case of looking at a marriage or a friendship, we might think to ourselves: if only the other person could be a better person than I'd have a better relationship with him/her. However, it

is harder to make such an argument about how we invest ourselves professionally. Examining that investment, and considering how we could optimally influence it, is the intent of these questions.

Relating to our professional relationships

We're in a relationship profession. Whether we consider our relationships to clients, employers, our professional organizations or our colleagues, the heart of our work takes place in relationships our skills help us create and co-manage. Of course, we're not channeling the spirit of Carl Rogers (1961) into every one of these relationships. Professionally, we juggle our multiple roles to be warm and empathic, productive and conscientious, ethical and competent, and supportive and resourceful. An insidious thing can happen to people (like us) who make themselves so constantly available to others: they can lose their ability to recognize and assert their needs. Here is where a virtue of selflessness can cross the line and become a vice. Healthy veterans in the helping professions often come to this realization, finding means to address it, while balancing their commitment to clients; others can hit a personal and professional wall with this challenge (Berger, 1995). Left unattended, such issues can nudge counsellors precipitously toward a slippery slope from which professional boundary violations are more likely to occur (Peterson, 1992). Conversely, sometimes the relentless relational demands on us spill over into our personal lives; prompting a retreat into isolation, even in our closest relationships where sharing the seemingly mundane aspects of daily life pales in contrast to the dramas of participating in clients' lives (Deutsch, 1985). Alongside those dramas can be complicated professional relationships that require deft skill in upholding. There are bosses to please, other human service professionals to partner with or lobby as we help clients, and the normal stuff of 'workplace politics'. Not surprisingly, many counsellors feel "peopled out" at the end of their workday. As the wife of a physician once told me, "he gave at the office". In short, there are relational tugs on our professionalism and civility constantly and these can stretch our sense of sociability, at the same time as we have social needs personally.

This part of the workshop asks participants to look at their relationships, cognizant that they are discussing them in relationships. Somehow sharing our experiences and preferences with another ups our investment in acting on what we share. This is what feminist and narrative therapists refer to as *witnessing* (Weingarten, 2000) or *audiencing* (Adams-Westcott & Isenbart, 1995) where our internal dialogue can be externalized, and take on a shared and often greater significance.

Questions

1) Where are your work relationships most/least satisfying to you? Explain.
2) Are there any differences in you personally, or socially, from the time you entered counselling until the present? To what do you attribute this sameness or difference? How would long term friends or family members answer this question as it pertains to you?
3) In what ways have your professional relationships enriched/eroded your most important relationships? Explain.
4) Being experienced as a counsellor, what advice would you give to someone entering the profession when it comes to balancing the relationship demands of this work? How did you come to have this opinion?
5) What more can you do to optimize the relationship balancing act so that you are doing more than just ensuring everyone else's needs are met, while yours go unattended? Describe, if you can, what that optimal balance might look like.

These questions can sometimes provoke painful recognitions, asking us to speak from aspects of our experience we can comfortably hear from our clients, but perhaps not from ourselves. Sharing such recognitions can promote a shared empathy and appreciation for the hard work counsellors do. One of the greatest burnout factors in our profession is the isolation that comes with not managing this relationship, in ways that covers everyone's needs, excluding our own. These discussions have the potential of opening counsellors to other similar conversations thereafter.

Our relationship with practice

Practicing as a counsellor involves ceaseless assessments, decisions and interventions – all of which can bring changes to the lives of our clients. Sometimes the expectation can feel like we are supposed to be batting 1000 when practically our shared triumphs with clients don't come close to that. We are paid to make a difference, and rising to the challenge means pitting our competence against problems that won't easily resolve. Our clients, and sometimes our employers, can equate what we do with medical intervention, expecting quick improvements as w*e administer treatment* to clients, as if our interventions were akin to medications (Stiles & Shapiro, 1989). Staying on top of the ceaseless innovations in counselling can be quite daunting; staying inspired by our ideas and interventions presents another challenge. Most master practitioners undertake shifts in the ideas and interventions they bring to counselling through the course of their career (Jennings & Skovholt, 1999). Bandwagon approaches come and go, research highlights new things to focus our clinical attention on, and we can lose faith in approaches that come to feel stale for us. At the same time, assessment and intervention seemingly require greater exactitude, as emphases on correct DSM-IV diagnoses and empirically validated treatments become increasing administrative expectations for how we practice.

Defining competent practice is not a precise science and has been the focus of many debates (e.g., Beutler, 2000). Despite such ambiguities about "good practice", it is more likely that we will hear about "screwing up" in our work than about our shared successes with clients. Regardless, we have ourselves to satisfy and one measure of our success is that we become obsolete professionally to our clients. The modal number of sessions clients will see us for is one (that's for 40% of what we do) and what apparently is considered helpful usually has little to do with the methods we use or our crafty interventions (Duncan & Miller, 2000; Talmon, 1990). Still, we have an understandable desire to practice competently, and succeed in navigating the complex expec-

tations our clients and employers have of us.

Turning to our work and feeling good about it clearly involves several factors. We want to be inspired, feel competent, know we're making a difference, and feel at home in what we do. This next set of questions is designed to tap into these factors, promoting consideration of our current competence while extending our sense of where we can continue to build on it.

Questions

1) What does it mean for you to practice competently? Where do you recognize your competence most as you counsel?
2) What ideas and innovations in your practice most inspire you? Explain.
3) If I interviewed some of your clients who felt most helped by you what would they tell me about your work with them that they most appreciated?
4) When do you feel most/least alive in your work as a counsellor? Please elaborate.
5) Looking ahead to when you move on from counselling, what are some of the key things you would like to point to you as the accomplishments and qualities you brought to your work? Are there things you need to yet do to see these qualities and accomplishments realized?

These questions conclude the workshop and serve as a good springboard to bring closure to the workshop.

Conclusion

It was Socrates who once said, "the unexamined life is not worth living" (cited in Helm, 1997, 38a). This workshop is presented as an opportunity to "take one's professional bearings". The motivation is to help counsellors reflect on and clarify where they stand, and what they want to do about some central issues related to long term, professionally and personally accountable (it is unusual to see these words paired up with notions of accountability) practice. Many workshops addressing such a topic are psychoeducational and usually focus on relevant information. This workshop is intentionally participatory, with the hope that engaging people in speaking to their experiences will make

further discussion and action based on the workshop discussions easier.

In debriefing the exercises, the participants are asked to consider how they will make use of the documentation put together for them by their interviewers. They are also asked what they would like to do to continue the conversations begun on these issues beyond the workshop. There are no expected outcomes in terms of where the workshop might take participants, but it is hoped that the exercises will engage them in becoming more active authors of their professional lives.

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Appendix A – Relating to our Intentions Questions

(to be answered in role-changing pairs – use the back of the page if required)

1) What initially motivated you to become a counsellor?

2) What are the primary intentions you bring to counselling now?

3) If these changed between starting as a counsellor and now, what prompted the change?

4) In reflecting on your interactions with clients and peers, where do you feel your intentions best show through in those interactions? Illustrate with examples.

5) What challenges do you face in keeping "on track" with your intentions? How can you rise to those challenges and still feel "on track"?

6) What has your relationship with your career intentions been like as you've faced the different challenges in being a counsellor? In other words, have your intentions been as much of a source of guidance and inspiration in your work as you would like? Explain.

7) In the long-run, what will tell you that you have practiced and lived in ways that have you feeling you've kept 'in sync' with your intentions?

Appendix B – Relating to Counselling Questions

(to be answered in role-changing pairs – use the back of the page if required)

1) What are the key factors, other than those you bring to counselling, that influence how you practice? To what extent have these come to define your practice? Explain.

2) Share your views on what it means to practice accountably. Be sure to include personal views as well as those from your employer, clients and professional organizations.
Describe your experience in trying to reconcile these views.

3) Identify those factors that most support AND most erode the quality of your relationship with counselling.

4) When do you feel your relationship with counselling is at its best? What specifically occurs then that makes your relationship with counselling feel at its best?

5) Here you are asked to imaginatively separate *you* the person from *you* the counsellor. Then, please give feedback to you the person in answering the following: a) what are the most important qualities that *s/he* (i.e., you the person) brings to counselling? b) how would you characterize the present relationship *you* the counsellor have with *you* the person? c) what does the counsellor in you need most from *him/her*?

6) Continuing on in this manner, but reversing roles so that *you* the person are in the 'hot seat': a) what experiences does *s/he* (the counsellor) bring to your life that you most/least appreciate? b) how would you characterize the present relationship you have with *him/her*? c) what do you most need from *him/her* to live a preferred life?

Appendix C – Relating to Counselling's Relationships Questions

(to be answered in role-changing pairs – use the back of the page if required)

1) Where are your work relationships most/least satisfying to you? Explain.

2) Are there any differences in you personally, or socially, from the time you entered counselling until the present? To what do you attribute this sameness or difference? How would long term friends or family members answer this question as it pertains to you?

3) In what ways have your professional relationships enriched/eroded your most important relationships? Explain.

4) Being experienced as a counsellor, what advice would you give to someone entering the profession when it comes to balancing the relationship demands of this work? How did you come to have this opinion?

5) What more can you do to optimize the relationship balancing act so that you are doing more than just ensuring everyone else's needs are met, while yours go unattended? Describe, if you can, what that optimal balance might look like.

Appendix D Relating to our Practice Questions

(to be answered in role-changing pairs – use the back of the page if required)

1) What does it mean for you to practice competently? Where do you recognize your competence most as you counsel?

2) What ideas and innovations in your practice most inspire you? Explain.

3) If I interviewed some of your clients who felt most helped by you what would they tell me about your work with them that they most appreciated?

4) When do you feel most/least alive in your work as a counsellor? Please elaborate.

5) Looking ahead to when you move on from counselling, what are some of the key things you would like to point to you as the accomplishments and qualities you brought to your work? Are there things you need to yet do to see these qualities and accomplishments realized?

Career Development of First-Year University Students:
A Test of Astin's Career Development Model

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Abstract

This study examined how the four constructs in Astin's (1984) career development model operate in the choice of college major career goals with a selected sample of 253 first-year university students. The results of 2x2 MANOVAs indicated significant gender and language differences on some of Astin's four factors. The results of Pearson product-moment correlations indicated that the four factors in Astin's model operate quite differently for students whose language of origin is not English. The results are discussed in terms of the developmental and cultural issues these students were facing. Implications for future research and interventions are also discussed.

Career Development of First-Year University Students: A Test of Astin's Career Development Model

Work has been a pervasive part of human existence and philosophical questions on the meaning of work have been raised as early as the time of the ancient Hebrews and Greeks (Axelson, 1993; Engels, Minor, Sampson, & Splete, 1995). Since Parsons (1909) presented the first conceptual framework for understanding individuals' career decision process, a growing number of theories and models of career development and career choice have emerged. Career development theorists have speculated about the meaning of work in people's lives. For example, Super (1951, 1953, 1963) emphasized the development and implementation of self-concept in the career development process. Holland (1966, 1985) sought to match individual personality types and environmental characteristics. Others suggested that work allowed individuals to fulfill certain basic needs (e.g., Astin, 1984; Roe, 1956). An underlying theme in these theories is that the salience of work in people's lives is important.

Although these models have made substantial contributions to the understanding of career decision making and career development, most theories are based on the experiences of white, middle-class males. Moreover, most career development theories also assume that individuals are free to choose from among an array of alternatives which are available to all. Thus, researchers have begun to question the relevance of these theories to women and individuals from different cultural, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980; Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Okocha, 1994; Perun & Bielby, 1981). As Okocha (1994) points out, many of the assumptions of career development theories ignore the social realities of special groups where career development may be constrained by such factors as prejudice, discrimination, and opportunity availability imposed by society's socio-political system (Griffith, 1980; Smith, 1983).

Theories Relating to the Career Development of Women

Theories related to women's career development began to emerge in the early 1980's (e.g., Astin, 1984; Farmer, 1985; Gottfredson, 1981; Hackett & Betz, 1981). These theories improved on earlier theories by taking into account variables which influence women's career choices, aspirations, and work behaviors. An extensive examination of each theory is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a brief overview of four selected theories/models is given to provide a context for the present study.

Hackett and Betz's Self-Efficacy Model

Hackett and Betz (1981) formulated a career development model based on Bandura's (1977) notion of self-efficacy, which attempted to explain some of the processes involved in men's and women's career pursuits and their beliefs about achievement. Hackett and Betz asserted that self-efficacy could explain the processes by which traditional gender role socialization influenced men's and women's self-referent evaluations in relation to career choices. They argued that women in general lack strong efficacy expectations in relation to career-related behaviors because they are less likely than men to be encouraged to develop their own career paths and have fewer female role models who are successful. They believed that self-efficacy could explain why some women do not fully develop their capabilities and talents in their career pursuit.

Gottfredson's Circumscription Theory

Gottfredson (1981) developed a model which incorporated several elements from earlier theories, namely: self-concept, developmental stages, and match between individuals and occupation. Gottfredson (1981) expanded on Super's (1951, 1953, 1963) idea that individuals seek jobs that are compatible with their self-concept. She suggests that a multi-faceted self-concept, influenced by variables such as gender, social class, and intelligence, plays a significant role in predicting occupational aspirations and career choices.

Gottfredson's (1981) model addresses women's career development in two different ways. First of all, it discusses the process of how individuals reach a compromise when they face conflicting goals. Gottfredson (1981) postulates that when career choice com-

promises are necessary, individuals are more ready to sacrifice their interests than to be in an occupation that is not "appropriate" for their gender, i.e., not compatible with a gender-stereotypic self-concept. The compromise process is particularly useful for understanding why women attempt to juggle priorities such as societal expectations, family obligations, and career aspirations. It also somewhat explains why women are concentrated in lower-pay and lower-status occupations despite their interests and aspirations. Second, Gottfredson maintains that individuals' perceptions of career and training opportunities play a significant role in determining their occupational aspirations and choices. This is particularly relevant to women because their career development is still limited by restricted occupational choices, unequal pay, stereotypes, and lack of role models who have broken the mould (e.g., Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Brooks, 1990; US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1991).

Farmer's Multidimensional Model

Farmer (1985) presented a multidimensional model of career and achievement motivation for women and men. Farmer was influenced by Bandura's social learning theory, which maintained that "psychological functioning involves a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavioral, cognitive, and environmental influence" (Bandura, 1978, p. 344). In her model, Farmer (1985) proposed that three sets of variables (background, environment, and personal) interact to influence the aspiration, mastery, and career commitment of men and women. Background variables such as age, gender, and ethnicity influence a person's developing self-concept, aspiration, achievement motivation, and the way the environment is perceived. The developing self-concept is further influenced by interaction with the environment, including experiences at school and support from family and teachers. Personal variables such as academic self-esteem and achievement styles in turn set limit to the influences of environment and have been found to influence career and achievement motivation. It is Farmer's contention that changes in society's attitude towards women working may influence changes in men's and women's achievement in the future.

Astin's Sociopsychological Model

Astin's (1984) model attempted to incorporate sociological as well as psychological factors, emphasizing that both psychological factors and cultural-environmental factors interact to influence career choice and work behavior. Astin's model includes four inter-related factors: motivation, work expectations, socialization, and structure of opportunity. See Figure 1.

According to Astin, work is important because it is a means to fulfilling certain basic needs such as survival, pleasure, and contribution. Astin (1984) contended that men and women share a common set of work motivations. What differentiates their work expectations and career outcomes is the mediating effect of the other variables. For Astin, work expectations refer to individuals' perceptions of their capabilities and strengths, the options available, and the kind of work which can best fulfill their needs. They are different for men and women because of their differential socialization experiences as well as their perception of the structure of opportunity. According to Astin, children are reinforced for engaging in gender-appropriate behaviors. As children internalize social norms and values
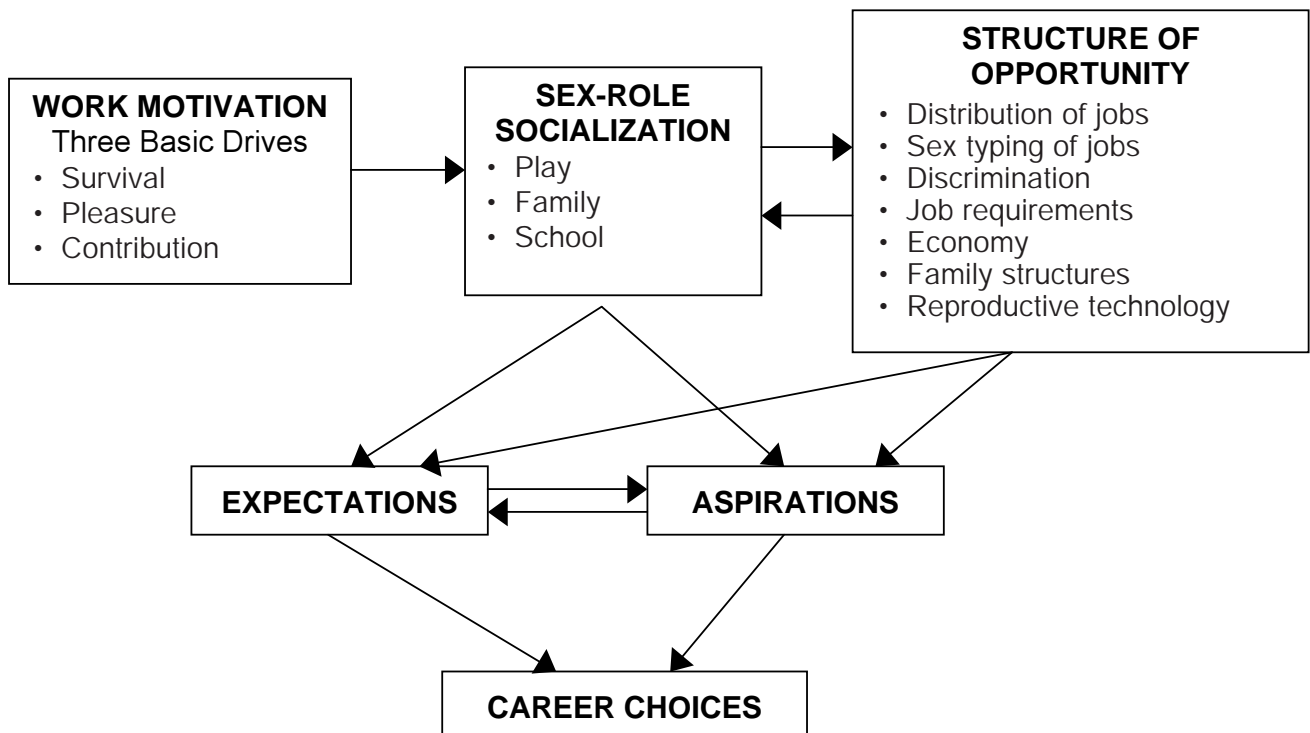
Figure 1

Figure 1. Helen Astin's Sociopsychological Model of Career Choice and Work Behavior

regarding appropriate sex-role behaviors and choices, they also become aware of the availability of opportunities. Implied in the theory is that socialization experiences can be either expanding (which promotes widespread options) or restricting (which promotes stereotyping).

The structure of opportunity construct in Astin's model was an important determining factor in the decision to use it as a theoretical framework in the present study. From Astin's perspective, opportunity structure is not static, but changes over time and across different segments of society. As society changes, men and women are faced with different environmental conditions which in turn modify their career aspirations and work behaviors. With rapid development in the world's economic and sociopolitical climate, Astin's (1984) model could be used to understand such career-related issues as life/career transition and career adjustment in people's lives. Implied in the conceptualization of the opportunity structure is the significance of individuals' perception and/or awareness of available options in the world of work. As such, opportunity structure could also help explain the differential career expectations and choices of men and women. Others have regarded Astin's (1984) model as having potential in both research and practice (Brooks, 1990; Gilbert, 1984). It also has the potential to address the career development of ethnic minorities who are faced with internal and external barriers (e.g., Coleman & Barker, 1992). These individuals' career expectations and choices are likely to be affected by their socialization process as well as availability of opportunities in the world of work.

It is interesting to note that since the publication of Astin's model in 1984, little research has been conducted to test its validity. This may be due to the fact that her model lacks operational definitions of the proposed constructs and specific hypotheses (e.g., Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Brooks, 1990; Harmon, 1984), which makes empirical tests of the model difficult. However, two studies indirectly examined some of the ideas proposed in Astin's model. Scott and Hatalla's (1990) data supported Astin's notion of the importance of

structure of opportunity as a major determinant in women's career choice. Poole, Langan-Fox, Ciavarella, and Omodei's (1991) findings confirmed Astin's ideas of the differential effects of socialization and structure of opportunity on the career choices of men and women. Astin's inclusion of cultural-environmental factors in her model enhances its efficacy in understanding career choice and work behavior in today's world. Yet, more research is needed to verify the model.

The Current Study

Using Astin's model as a theoretical framework, the present study addressed some missing pieces in the career development literature. One purpose of the study was to examine how the four constructs in Astin's model operate in the choice of career/college major of a selected sample of first-year university students. It was hypothesized that Astin's four constructs would all be important, but would operate differently for students whose socialization and life/work experiences were different.

Methodology

Sample. An invitation to participate in this study was given to 376 first-year students participating in a orientation program in a major university in Western Canada. Responses were collected from 264 students, providing a return rate of approximately 70%. Of these, 11 were either incomplete or spoiled, leaving 253 students for the data analysis. Student language of origin (English or non-English) was used to group students in the data analysis. Approximately 88 % of the participants were in the 17 to 20 year age range. (See Table 1.) About two-thirds of the sample were female. About 83% of the students were English-speaking and about 81% had resided in Canada since birth. Approximately 84% of the students had previous job experience, 67% had selected a major, and 62% had selected an occupational goal. These figures are roughly proportional to the entire population of first year students, as reported by the office of institutional analysis.

Data source. The survey instrument used in the study consisted of two parts. Part 1 collected demographic data

from participants, including: gender, age, residency status, length of stay in Canada, language of origin, English proficiency, proposed major, and occupational goal. Part 2 consisted of 40 items, 10 items for each of the four constructs in Astin's model namely: motivation, work expectation, socialization, and structure of opportunity. Since there is no published instrument reflecting Astin's model, a survey instrument was developed, following the methods suggested by Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1994). Initially, an extensive item pool was developed, based on descriptions of the constructs in the literature. Then, five experts who were familiar with Astin's work were asked to rate the items independently, indicating which of the four constructs each item represented. Cohen's Kappa was calculated to assess inter-rater agreement. It was used in preference to percentage agreement because it accounts for chance agreement amongst raters. Items where there was a low amount of inter-rater agreement were discarded or revised and the procedure repeated until suitable inter-rater agreement was obtained regarding the subscale to which each item belonged. For the final round of rating, significant Kappa indicates significant agreement amongst raters beyond chance, $p \le 0.01$.

Procedures. Data were collected during a break in an orientation program for new students. The first author introduced herself, gave a brief description of the study, explained the nature of participants' involvement, and distributed the research packages to students. The package contained: a copy of the questionnaire, a cover letter describing the purpose of the study and the nature of participant involvement, and a consent form. Students who agreed to participate in the study read the cover letter, signed the consent form, and proceeded to fill out the questionnaire, returning it to a collection box in the administration area or at the entrance of the Student Resource Center.

Results

The data were analyzed in several steps. Two-way MANOVAs were used to assess gender and language differences among students. Pearson product-

Table 1

Demographic Information on Sample of 253 University Undergraduates

Variable	Language of Origin				Total
	English		Non-English		
	M	F	M	F	
Length of residency					
Since birth	56 (22.67)	134 (54.26)	5 (2.02)	6 (2.43)	201 (81.38)
Less than 15 years	5 (2.02)	11 (4.45)	14 (5.67)	16 (6.48)	46 (18.62)
Total	61 (24.69)	145 (58.71)	19 (7.69)	22 (8.91)	
Total Language	206 (83.40)		41 (16.60)		247 (100)
Job experience					
Yes	50 (20.08)	129 (51.81)	12 (4.82)	18 (7.23)	209 (83.94)
No	12 (4.82)	16 (6.43)	8 (3.21)	4 (1.61)	40 (16.06)
Total	62 (24.90)	145 (58.24)	20 (8.03)	22 (8.84)	
Total Job Experience	207 (83.13)		42 (16.87)		249 (100)
Major selection					
Yes	42 (16.94)	93 (37.50)	13 (5.24)	17 (6.86)	165 (66.53)
No	20 (8.06)	51 (20.56)	7 (2.82)	5 (2.02)	83 (33.47)
Total	62 (25.00)	144 (58.06)	20 (8.06)	22 (8.88)	
Total Major Selection	206 (83.06)		42 (16.94)		248 (100)
Occupation selection					
Decided	37 (14.98)	89 (36.03)	11 (4.45)	16 (6.48)	153 (61.94)
Undecided	24 (9.72)	56 (22.67)	8 (3.24)	6 (2.43)	94 (38.06)
Total	61 (24.70)	145 (58.70)	19 (7.69)	22 (8.91)	
Total Occupation Selection	206 (83.40)		41 (16.60)		247 (100)
Total*	62 (24.90)	145 (58.23)	20 (8.03)	22 (8.84)	249 (100)

Note. Some subgroups do not add up to the total because some participants did not provide complete demographic information. The numbers in parentheses are percentages.

moment correlations were conducted to assess the relationships among the four factors in Astin's model: motivation, work expectations, sex-role socialization, and structure of opportunity.

Gender Differences

Five, 2 (gender) x 2 (demographic variable) MANOVAs were conducted to assess gender differences on the four factors in Astin's model. For each analysis, gender was crossed with one of the following demographic variables: students' language of origin, students' length of residency in Canada, whether students had previous job experience, whether students had selected a major, and whether students had decided on an occupational goal. Gender was not crossed with other demographic variables because of insufficient number of students in some cells. The results of the MANOVAs indicated a significant main effect for gender, $\underline{F}(4, 242) = 2.71$, $\underline{p} < .05$. See Table 2. More specifically, female students scored significantly higher than male students on the socialization sub-scale and structure of opportunity sub-scale across all five demographic variables. In other words, the socialization experiences of female students were more expanding and less gender stereotypic than was the case for male students. Females also were more aware of the economic conditions, job market realities, and opportunities available to women, than were male students.

Language Differences

Three, 2 (language of origin) x 2 (demographic variable) MANOVAs were conducted to assess differences on Astin's four factors between students whose language of origin was English and those whose language of origin was not English. In these analyses, language of origin was crossed with: length of residency in Canada, whether students had previous job experience, and whether students had decided on an occupational goal. Language of origin was not crossed with other demographic variables because of insufficient

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations Depicting Gender Differences on Astin's Four Factors

Demographic Variable	Structure of opportunity	Motivation	Expectation	Socialization
Language of origin				
Male (n=82)	5.99* (3.94)	12.15 (4.32)	11.50 (4.65)	8.84** (5.02)
Female (n=167)	6.80* (2.94)	12.77 (4.03)	12.17 (3.79)	10.75** (4.58)
Length of residency				
Male (n=81)	5.89* (3.91)	12.10 (4.32)	11.43 (4.64)	8.77** (5.02)
Female (n=168)	6.79* (2.93)	12.76 (4.02)	12.17 (3.78)	10.73** (4.58)
Job experience				
Male (n=83)	5.96* (3.92)	12.17 (4.30)	11.51 (4.62)	8.84** (4.99)
Female (n=168)	6.79* (2.93)	12.76 (4.02)	12.17 (3.78)	10.73** (4.58)
Major selection				
Male (n=83)	5.96* (3.92)	12.17 (4.30)	11.51 (4.62)	8.84** (4.99)
Female (n=167)	6.77* (2.94)	12.75 (4.03)	12.14 (3.76)	10.71** (4.59)
Occupation decision				
Male (n=81)	6.14* (3.81)	12.40 (4.02)	11.84 (4.10)	9.06** (4.75)
Female (168)	6.79* (2.93)	12.76 (4.02)	12.17 (3.78)	10.73** (4.58)

Note. The numbers in parenthesis are standard deviations.

* indicates $\underline{p} < .05$, ** indicates $\underline{p} < .01$.

number of students in some cells. The results of the MANOVAs indicated a significant main effect for language of origin, $F(4,242) = 4.72$, $p < .01$. See Table 3. More specifically, students whose language of origin was English scored significantly higher than students whose language of origin was not English on the socialization sub-scale across the three demographic variables. In other words, the socialization experiences of students whose language of origin was English was more expanding than that of students whose language of origin was not English.

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to assess the relationships between Astin's four factors for the entire sample and for four subgroups of students: male students, female students, students whose language of origin was English, and students whose language of origin was not English. The data show that for the entire sample, all factors were significantly correlated, except for the nonsignificant relationship between socialization and structure of opportunity. The correlations for males, females, and students whose language of origin was English, demonstrated a similar pattern. However, for students whose language of origin was not English, the pattern was markedly different. Expectation was significantly correlated with the other three factors, but the other three factors were relatively independent of each other. See Table 4. This suggests that for students whose first language is not English, motivation, socialization, and structure of opportunity are relatively independent of each other, while each of these factors is related closely to the student's expectations of the world of work.

Supplementary Analyses

In order to explore other possible explanations for the above findings, several MANOVAs were conducted using the remaining demographic factors as classification variables. Crosstabs also were calculated to determine whether the key variables reported above might be disproportionately represented in other demographic factors. The results that reached significance ($p \leq .05$) are reported below. The MANOVAs revealed that students who had previous job experience had higher mean scores on the motivation subscale and the expectation sub-scale than students with no previous job experience. This suggests that students with job experience were more motivated towards achieving their goals and were more aware of their own capabilities, strengths, and needs. Similar results were obtained for students who had selected an academic major and those who had decided on an occupational goal. We also found that female students tended to have more previous career-related experience than did male students. Many females had volunteer experience which helped shape their career interests while others had attended workshops to gather career-related information before they entered university. Females in our study also were more likely to have received support from parents and/or significant others to pursue higher education and to develop their own careers.

Discussion

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations Depicting Language Differences on Astin's Four Factors

Demographic Variable	Structure of opportunity	Motivation	Expectation	Socialization
Length of residency				
English (n=207)	6.52 (3.19)	12.59 (4.11)	11.99 (4.08)	10.73** (4.60)
Non-English (n=42)	6.52 (3.94)	12.31 (4.26)	11.57 (4.21)	6.90** (5.26)
Job experience				
English (n=208)	6.54 (3.21)	12.59 (4.10)	12.00 (4.07)	10.74** (4.59)
Non-English (n=43)	6.51 (3.90)	12.42 (4.27)	11.67 (4.22)	7.02** (5.26)
Occupation decision				
English (n=207)	6.58 (3.17)	12.61 (4.10)	12.08 (3.89)	10.82** (4.45)
Non-English (n=42)	6.69 (3.76)	12.76 (3.67)	11.90 (3.99)	7.05** (5.32)

Note: The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

* indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 4

Correlations Between the Four Dependent Measures for the Entire Sample and Four Sub-Groups of Students

Variable	Structure of opportunity	Expectation	Socialization
Motivation			
Entire sample (n=253)	*.51***	*.27***	*.34***
Male (n=83)	.58**	.34**	.37**
Female (n=168)	.48**	.24**	.23**
English (n=208)	.50**	.28**	.28**
Non-English (n=42)	.56**	.27	.20
Expectation			
Entire sample	--	.38**	.37**
Male	--	.49**	.54**
Female	--	.29**	.26**
English	--	.39**	.35**
Non-English	--	.41**	.48**
Socialization			
Entire sample	--	--	.11
Male	--	--	.25**
Female	--	--	.22**
English	--	--	.30**
Non-English	--	--	.09

Note. * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$.

In general, the findings of the present study suggest that motivation, work expectations, socialization, and structure of opportunity all play an important role in the career development of this group of first-year university students, but they operate differently for males and females and for people whose language of origin is not English. The socialization experiences of female students in our study were more expanding than that of male students. Females also were more aware that women are playing a more significant role in the job market and that gender discrimination may still be present in the world of work. This is consistent with other reports indicating that despite increased participation of women in the labor force, their opportunity is still limited by restricted occupational choices, unequal pay, and discrimination (e.g., Brooks, 1990; Ihle, Sodowsky, & Kwan, 1996; Murrell, Frieze, & Frost, 1991; U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1991). As suggested in Astin's (1984) model, such information is important to female students when they choose academic majors and subsequent career paths.

It is important to acknowledge that some of the findings in our supplementary analyses suggest that gender alone may not be the pivotal factor in creating these differences. Students who had previous job experience were aware of their own interests, strengths, and needs and were more likely to have selected an occupational goal. Females also were more likely to have previous job experiences and have engaged in career exploration activities. These career-related experiences are likely a part of the career socialization process which helps refine career interests and goals. Thus, it is not clear at present whether gender per se is responsible for these differences or whether other mediating factors might be operating. Regardless

though, these findings confirm the role motivation and expectation play in student career decisions as suggested in Astin's (1984) model.

The findings in this study reveal some interesting observations about language and culture. The differences in the language of origin variable on the socialization subscale provide support for previous reports suggesting that individuals from different cultures are socialized in different ways (e.g., Harter, 1988; Valsiner, 1989). The lower scores on the socialization subscale for students whose language of origin was not English may suggest that these students have been socialized to believe that career was secondary for women and that women should not be independent. This may indeed be a reflection on the socialization process of certain cultures. Chinese women for example, are socialized to be dependent, nurturing, and less successful than men. They are also expected to demonstrate "female" traits and to conform to a set of restricted role expectations (e.g., Chiu, 1990; Wang & Creedon, 1989). In a study based on the Hong Kong 1981 census data (Tsang, 1993), it was found that gender was still a crucial factor influencing the educational attainment and status attainment of men and women in Hong Kong. Tsang (1993) maintained that women experienced more constraints and less encouragement than men during the educational and/or status attainment process. He attributed these findings to the different socialization of men and women in Hong Kong, who grew up with different expectations and aspirations. If such is the case for students whose language of origin was not English in the present study, counselors and faculty will play an important role in assisting these students to deal with both internal and external barriers during their academic and career development process.

When examining the relationships between the motivation, socialization, expectation, and structure of opportunity, our data show mixed support for Astin's model. For the sample as a whole, as well as for males, females, and students whose language of origin was English the four factors are interrelated. However, for students whose language of origin was not English, expectation was significantly related to the other three factors, but the other three factors are independent of each other. This suggests that work expectation is the most operative factor for this group of students. However, in Astin's (1984) model there is no direct path linking motivation and work expectation. In fact, Astin (1984) maintained that work expectation was a function of one's socialization and perceived structure of opportunity, but not of motivation. Our data may suggest an adaptation of Astin's original contention to give more prominence to expectation than was previously given. For the group of students in our study, awareness of their own capabilities, strengths, and needs will most likely enhance their academic and career development process. Furthermore, the strongest positive relationship was obtained between motivation and work expectation. This suggests that students who were more aware of their interests, strengths, and goals were more motivated to achieve their goals, and vice versa.

One caution should be exercised when interpreting our data. One of the limitations of the present study was the homogeneity of the sample. Approximately 80% of the students in our study were between the ages of 17 and 20 and had just graduated from high school before entering university, were born in Canada, and spoke English as their first language. Furthermore, the small number of students whose language of origin was not English made it impossible to investigate the experiences of students who belonged to diverse cultural groups. In the same vein, it is important for readers to consider how similar this sample might be to a sample of first year students in other regions, i.e., to what extent are the characteristics of first year students in a Western Canadian university similar to those of first year students in Atlantic Canada or downtown Toronto? It would be interesting to replicate this study with a cross geographic sample to determine how robust the findings were and how generalizable were the findings to first year Canadian students in general. These cautions notwithstanding, our data does provide some support for Astin's model and suggests that it has potential for explaining the diverse experiences of first year undergraduate students.

To conclude, the findings of the present study suggest that the four constructs in Astin's (1984) model namely, motivation, work expectations, socialization, and structure of opportunity all play a role in the career development of this group of first-year university students. Student retention has been identified as an emerging concern of institutions of higher education (Bishop, 1990). Early career intervention is necessary to identify and assist students who are at risk of dropping out of university. Our data suggest that intervention focusing on broadening the socialization experiences of young people, especial males, may help to increase awareness of opportunities, and heighten work-related expectations. Experiences designed to heighten work-related motivation may also have a similar effect.

The changing demographics and global trends have made career development an increasingly challenging task to this group of young people. It is apparent that the tasks of career counselors and practitioners are also increasingly complex and demanding. More theory-driven research is called for (Betz, 1991) to guide practices. Proactive approaches such as career workshops and seminars, and faculty members as mentors and advisors could provide students with the necessary resources and support. Integration of career-related concepts and attitudes into academic programs could also promote students' self-awareness, career mindfulness, and problem-solving skills. In order to maximize the quality and proficiency of the delivery of educational programs and career services, a closer collaboration among university administrators, faculty members, and student affairs personnel, becomes all the more essential.

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The Longitudinal Effect of Information Seeking on Socialisation and Development in Three Organisations: Filling the Research Gaps

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Abstract

In this study, we have examined the longitudinal effect of various sources and strategies of information seeking by newcomers on organisational knowledge and commitment. Respondents were junior managers, rank-and-file employees, and IT professionals from three organisations in the Netherlands (total number of respondents N = 207). They completed two written questionnaires, after having been in employment for two and ten months respectively. Results showed significant differences in the information seeking and socialisation of the newcomers from the three organisations. The junior managers from the postal and telecom organisation more often turned to supervisors with questions, and the IT professionals observed less and asked fewer questions of their co-workers and more of support staff. The IT professionals scored lowest on all socialisation outcomes and their affective commitment decreased over time. Surprisingly, we found that observing and written material were most strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment. The study concludes with a discussion of the results and implications for future research and organisational practice.

Introduction

Several studies have shown that newcomers integrate and develop in organisations by actively seeking information (Chao, O'Leary-Kelley, Wolf, Klein and Gardner, 1994; Louis, 1990; Miller and Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Mullen, 1999; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Wanous and Colella, 1989). These studies show that newcomers employ various strategies and various sources in gathering information. The studies also show that the frequency of information seeking is related to socialisation outcomes such as organisational commitment. However, there are some important gaps in the current knowledge on the influence of information seeking on socialisation, which the present study seeks to address.

The Use of Various Strategies and Sources in Information Seeking

Several studies have shown that newcomers in organisations use various strategies for information acquisition (Ashford and Cummings, 1983; Callister, Kramer and Turban, 1999; Miller and Jablin, 1991; Morand, 2000; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; 1993). The following three strategies are frequently distinguished: 1) *monitoring,* i.e. observing by seeking signals that can be derived from an event, the behaviour of others, or both; 2) *inquiring*, i.e. overtly and directly asking people for information; and 3) *consulting written material*, i.e. reading memos, annual reports, or company magazines to acquire information. Research findings indicate that, as a rule, individuals more often observe other people than ask them questions (Ashford, 1986; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b). However, these studies only compared the overall frequencies of using the two strategies of observing and asking questions; and did not distinguish between the various targets such as supervisors, co-workers, other newcomers, support staff, and organisational outsiders such as clients, family, and friends. We would argue that newcomers employ various strategies and various sources in gathering information. The studies also show that the frequency of information seeking is related to socialisation outcomes such as organisational commitment. However, there are some important gaps in the current knowledge on the influence of information seeking on socialisation, which the present study seeks to address that this is an important issue, and hence, in the present study, we have investigated this further. We would expect that, as a rule, newcomers more often ask questions directly to supervisors and experienced co-workers to gain information than they would observe them, because it gives the most accurate information. Conversely, we hypothesise that newcomers will more often observe than question in seeking information from other newcomers, support staff, and from people outside the organisation such as clients, family, and friends.

Hypothesis 1a: Newcomers more often ask questions directly to supervisors to gain information than they would observe them.

Hypothesis 1b: Newcomers more often ask questions directly to experienced co-workers to gain information than they would observe them.

Hypothesis 1c: Newcomers more often observe than question in seeking information from other newcomers.

Hypothesis 1d: Newcomers more often observe than question in seeking information from support staff.

Hypothesis 1e: Newcomers more often observe than question in seeking information from people outside the organisation such as clients, family, and friends.

Changes in Sources and Strategies for Information Seeking over Time

An important aspect of a newcomer's socialisation process is that the use of the sources and strategies for information seeking may change over time. Morrison's contrary finding (1993), that the use of strategies was fairly stable

over time, may be caused by the fact that she did not distinguish between the various information sources. A combination of an increase in using some sources and a decrease in using others may have led to the apparent lack of overall change. To resolve this issue, we therefore examined the changes in the various sources and strategies of information seeking over time. In line with Ashford (1986), who asserted that greater so-called social costs are associated with information seeking as tenure increases, we would expect to see, over time, an increase in the non-personal strategies of observing and studying written material, and a decrease in seeking information directly from personal sources. Specifically, we hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 2a: Over time the use of observing and consulting written material increases. *Hypothesis 2b:* Over time the use of consulting written material increases.

Hypothesis 2c: Over time the use of asking supervisors for information decreases.

Hypothesis 2d: Over time the use of asking co-workers for information decreases.

Differences in Information Seeking between Situations

Another gap in the earlier research is that most previous studies on information seeking are based on samples of business school or university alumni who are generally occupying *managerial* positions (e.g., Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Saks and Ashforth, 1997). However, other groups of employees, and/or other types of organisation, may use different sources and strategies in information seeking and this may have consequences for the way in which and the degree to which they integrate in the organisation and their career develops (cf. Cable and Parsons, 2001; Finkelstein, Kulas and Dages, 2003; Scholarios, Lockyer and Johnson, 2003). Morrison (1993a) also noted that in order to generalise the results, it is important to investigate newcomer information seeking across organisational contexts. The present study therefore explores differences in the use of sources and strategies for information seeking among three diverse groups of

workers: junior managers in a postal and telecom company, professionals working in an organisation specialising in information technology, and rank-and-file employees working at a holiday resort. This is of interest because differential use of information seeking may result in different ways and/or different degrees of integration and career development in an organisation. Baruch (2004) stated that the entry stage has a strong impact on further career advancement and progress in the organisation.

The Effect of Information Seeking on Organisational Knowledge and Commitment

A final contribution of the present study is that it includes both organisational knowledge and commitment as indicators of integration in the organisation. A review of organisational socialisation by Bauer, Morrison and Callister (1998) notes that most studies only include attitudinal outcome measures, such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment, as indicators of integration in an organisation (see also e.g. Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). By relying solely on these types of outcomes, the studies imply that socialisation is characterised by how adjusted newcomers *feel* they are. However, it is also important to examine the effect of information seeking on the *actual* amount of knowledge acquired on various aspects of the organisation: performance proficiency, goals/values, people, history, politics, and its language (Chao et al., 1994). Therefore, the present study examines the effect of information seeking not only on commonly used socialisation outcome variables, such as affective organisational commitment (Meyer, 1998; Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli, 2001), but also on the actual knowledge of various organisational domains.

Moreover, not much is known about the effect on these socialisation outcomes of using the various sources and strategies. It may be that integration into an organisation is enhanced if employees more frequently use direct communication with co-workers and supervisors. Finkelstein et al. (2003) found that the use of covert information

seeking led to relatively low levels of role clarity and job satisfaction. The studies by Louis, Posner, and Powell (1983) and Morrison (1993a, 1993b, and 1995) showed that newcomers often directly approached their supervisors and experienced co-workers with questions. A major reason for this may be that newcomers generally communicate with sources who possess the required information, are accessible, are willing to share the information, and who give an accurate representation of the information (DeWhirst, 1971; Miller and Jablin, 1991). Based on this, we would expect that:

*Hypothesis 3a: A*sking supervisors and experienced co-workers for information is most strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment.

Moreover, since observing entails the risk of misinterpretation (Ashford and Cummings, 1983; Miller and Jablin, 1991), we would expect observing to be less strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment

Hypothesis 3b: Observing is less strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment.

Finally, the use of written material may be the least productive and useful strategy because it lacks face-to-face communication and because the information sought is often not written down but forms part of the unwritten knowledge of an organisation. Therefore, we would expect:

Hypothesis 3c: Written material is the least strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment.

METHOD

Sample

Between June 1997 and April 1998, 560 newcomers in three organisations were sent a written questionnaire and asked to participate in this study (Ardts, 2002). They were informed that they would receive a second questionnaire eight months later. The choice for this time interval was based on earlier research suggesting that this was a meaningful interval in the socialisation process (see Morrison, 1993a). The response rate was 64% (N =361) at time 1; and, of these, 57% (N = 207) responded a second time. These are

acceptable response rates according to Baruch (1999). Only the information on the 207 people who completed both questionnaires is used in the further analysis.

At time 1, the average job tenure was two months (SD = 1.4) and the average work experience was five years (SD = 3.1). Fifty-seven per cent of the respondents were male. The mean age was 29 years (SD = 7.9).

The three organisations were selected because they differed markedly with respect to the type and rank of the jobs of the newcomers, and therefore potentially in the way that the newcomers would seek information. The total sample was made up of: (1) rank-and-file employees working in a holiday resort (N = 89); (2) junior managers with a postal and telecom company (N = 67); and (3) professionals in an organisation specialising in information technology (N = 51). The three samples did not differ significantly in age, but they did differ with respect to gender and level of education. The rank-and-file group had the highest percentage of women, and the IT professional group the lowest. The rank-and-file employees, unsurprisingly, in general had lower levels of education than the professionals and the junior managers. These two demographic variables (gender and education level) were controlled for in the analyses.

To check whether there were differences between respondents who participated at time 1 only and those who completed both questionnaires, multivariate analyses of variance and subsequent t-tests for the total group, and for each sub-group separately, were performed on the variables used in the study. The (M)ANOVA results showed that, for the junior managers and the rank-and-file employees, the respondents who participated only at time 1 did differ significantly from those respondents who participated at both times. Results of the subsequent t-tests indicated that rank-and-file respondents and junior managers who participated at time 1 only had slightly lower scores on affective organisational commitment and organisational knowledge of company history and language than those respondents who participated twice. This should not be overlooked when interpreting the results.

Measures

The variables were measured through the questionnaire using established multi-item scales. The conventional scale items were translated into Dutch by the authors. In order to check that the Dutch terms had the same meaning as the original English ones, we employed back-translation using an English colleague to translate the Dutch terms back into English, and then compared his terms with the original expressions. Following this, a few minor adjustments were made.

Information Seeking. Information seeking was measured at time 1 and time 2 using a Dutch translation of Morrison's (1993a, 1993b) ten items. Six items assessed the frequency with which newcomers asked six different sources for information about expected attitudes and behaviour in the organisation: the immediate supervisor, another indirect supervisor, another newcomer, an experienced colleague, a person outside the organisation such as clients, friends, and family, and a person in a support function. Answers were given using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = never to 5 = very often. Although in Morrison's study the inquiry items were combined into one factor, in the present study these six items were used separately since an explicit objective of this study was to examine differences between the various sources addressed in search of information. Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficients between the six items are positive but not excessively so, ranging from 0.05 (not significant (ns)) for the relationship between approaching experienced co-workers and support staff for information to 0.48 ($p<0.001$) for the relationship between approaching immediate supervisors and indirect supervisors for information. One item was used to measure the frequency of consulting written material. The use made of observation was measured using three items that probed how often the respondents observed their environment to find out about expected attitudes and behaviour. An example item is "Observing what behaviour is rewarded in the organisation and using this as a cue to what is desirable or expected". Reliability analyses were performed for the three observation items, for each group of workers, at time 1 and time 2. The alpha coefficients were sufficiently high, except for the junior managers at time 2 (alpha = 0.57).

Organisational Knowledge Domains. To assess the newcomer's knowledge of the organisation, a Dutch translation of Chao et al.'s (1994) instrument was used. The authors developed 34 items to measure the following six knowledge domains: performance proficiency, history, language, organisational goals/values, politics, and people. All answers were scored on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 = I strongly disagree, to 5 = I strongly agree. We performed reliability analyses and, on the basis of this, we decided to delete the least reliable items in the present study. Although we acknowledge that in many ways it would be better to use the full list so that one can compare the results of this study with the results of previous studies, we preferred using incomplete but reliable scales rather than complete but unreliable scales. Therefore, we deleted four items that coincidentally also had high cross-loadings of >0.40 in Chao et al.'s study. These items were: "I would be a good representative of my organisation"; "I believe that I fit in well with my organisation"; "I understand the goals of my organisation"; and "I have not yet learned 'the ropes' of my job." We performed a factor analysis on the resulting items using varimax rotation. This analysis resulted in six factors that were consistent with the six knowledge domains and explained 62% of the variance. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.64 to 0.82 at time 1, and from 0.68 to 0.81 at time 2, indicating sufficient reliability in the sub-scales. The only exception was the People knowledge domain, which was consequently excluded from the present study.

Affective Organisational Commitment. Affective organisational commitment was measured using the instrument developed by Allen and Meyer (1990, 1996; Meyer, Allen and Smith, 1993). This instrument consists of five items. Answers are given on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 = I strongly disagree to 5 = I strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the total group and the three sub-groups

ranged from 0.81 to 0.84 at time 1, and from 0.76 to 0.88 at time 2, indicating that the scales were sufficiently reliable.

RESULTS

In order to test the hypotheses, various analyses were performed (cf. Van der Velde and Feij, 1995). Firstly, the differences in the mean scores for all the variables among the three groups at time 1 and time 2 were tested using multivariate analyses of covariance. In these (M)ANOVAs, two demographic variables, gender and level of education, were included as covariates (see Method section). Results show that the groups differed significantly in the mean scores at both time 1 ($F(8, 198) = 6.54, p <0.001$) and at time 2 ($F(8, 199) = 5.54, p <0.001$). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 1. This table also includes the results of paired t-tests analysing changes in the mean scores over time for the three groups. Correlation coefficients are also shown for all the variables between time 1 and time 2 for the three groups.

The Use of Various Sources and Strategies in Information Seeking

Table 1 shows that, of the various strategies, the junior managers most often approached their experienced co-workers and their direct supervisors, both at time 1 and time 2. Rank-and-file newcomers also favoured approaching experienced co-workers over the other options, both at time 1 and time 2. IT professionals would most often ask their supervisors, experienced colleagues, and individuals in support functions for information at both times.

Thus, hypotheses 1a and 1b, which state that, in general, newcomers more often ask supervisors and experienced co-workers for information than use observation, are supported for all three groups.

In addition, hypotheses 1c to 1e, stating that newcomers more often observe than seek information from other newcomers, support staff, or people outside the organisation, are supported by the junior manager and rank-and-file employee groups. These hypotheses are, however, rejected for the IT professionals. For this group, the mean scores on observing were lower

than on asking support staff and other newcomers for information. In the next section, these differences in information seeking between the worker groups are examined more closely.

Differences in Information Seeking and Socialisation Outcomes between the three groups

The univariate analyses of variance presented in Table 1 show that, both at time 1 and at time 2, the three groups differ significantly in terms of all the information seeking variables, with the exception of asking other newcomers for information. It appears that junior managers approach their immediate and indirect supervisors more often than the rank-and-file and IT professional newcomers do. Furthermore, the table shows that the IT professionals score significantly lower on the observation criterion, both at time 1 and time 2, than do the junior managers and the rank-and-file employees. The IT professionals also score lower than the other two groups when it comes to asking co-workers for information. The IT Professionals score highest on addressing support staff, and the junior managers score higher than the other groups on seeking information from persons outside the organisation.

Finally, the results in the table show that the IT professionals differed significantly from the junior managers and the rank-and-file employees with respect to all the socialisation outcomes, both at time 1 and time 2. The IT professionals generally have less knowledge of their organisation and are less committed to it. The junior managers and the rank-and-file newcomers have similar attitudes to each other in terms of organisational knowledge and commitment.

Changes in Sources and Strategies of Information Seeking in Time

Correlation coefficients of all the variables between time 1 and time 2 (r), and paired t-test results (t), were also calculated and included in Table 1. These show that for the manager group all but one of the correlation coefficients were significant. The coefficients ranged from 0.15 (ns) for asking an experienced co-worker for information,

to 0.66 ($p<0.001$) for observing. For the rank-and-file newcomers, five of the eight coefficients were significant. The coefficients ranged from 0.13 (ns) for asking support staff for information at time 1 and time 2, to 0.49 ($p<0.001$) for consulting written material. For the IT professionals, six of the eight correlation coefficients were significant – ranging from 0.09 (ns) for asking another newcomer for information at time 1 and time 2, to 0.56 ($p<0.001$) for observing. However, the correlation coefficients only show whether the relative scores of the respondents are stable over time, it is still possible that the mean scores have increased or decreased. This can be examined using paired t-tests. The results of these tests show that for some of the information seeking variables, the individual groups show a significant change in mean scores over time. For the junior managers, four of the eight mean scores had changed. At time 2, compared with at time 1, they more often asked people outside the organisation for information and individuals in support functions less often, they observed more often, and they consulted written material less often. For the rank-and-file employees, three mean scores had changed. Over time, the frequencies of asking people outside the organisation, consulting written material, and observing increased. The frequency of only one variable in information seeking changed with the IT professionals: they increased their frequency of asking people outside the organisation for information over time.

The results thus show support for hypotheses 2a and 2b: that, over time, the use made of observing and consulting written material increases. Hypotheses 2c and 2d, stating that asking questions to supervisors and experienced co-workers for information decreases over time, were, however, not supported.

With respect to changes in the socialisation outcomes, the organisational knowledge domains and organisational commitment, all the time 1 and time 2 correlation coefficients, for all the groups, were significant. Furthermore, the paired t-tests show that the junior managers made the largest number of positive changes:

Table 1.

Results of Paired t-tests, Correlation Coefficients, and ANOVAs.
Differences in and between the three groups in mean scores for information seeking, organisational knowledge domains, and organisational commitment at Time 1 and Time 2 (standard deviations are given in parentheses)

Information seeking	Managers (N=67)				Rank-and-file (N=89)				Professionals (N=51)				Total (N=207)	
	M (Sd) T1	M (Sd) T2	t	r	M (Sd) T1	M (Sd) T2	t	r	M (Sd) T1	M (Sd) T2	t	r	F T1	F T2
Asking immediate supervisor	3.90 (0.86)	4.09 (0.90)	-1.61	0.37 **	3.11 (1.31)	3.22 (1.40)	-0.64	0.35 **	3.10 (0.98)	+3.22 (1.19)	-0.66	0.32 *	24.66 ***	12.34 ***
Asking indirect supervisor	3.43 (1.13)	3.45 (1.33)	-0.10	0.54 ***	1.91 (1.14)	2.18 (1.28)	-1.77	0.33 **	2.71 (0.97)	2.76 (1.27)	-0.30	0.25	52.47 ***	18.40 ***
Asking another newcomer	3.01 (1.37)	3.19 (1.37)	-0.98	0.40 **	3.15 (1.31)	3.17 (1.27)	-0.13	0.16	2.88 (1.26)	2.90 (1.33)	-0.08	0.09	1.29	.80
Asking experienced co-worker	4.19 (0.93)	4.22 (0.98)	-0.20	0.15	4.44 (0.81)	4.48 (0.86)	-0.29	0.15	3.02 (1.21)	3.33 (1.38)	-1.53	0.37 **	54.26 ***	19.29 ***
Asking outside of the firm	2.52 (1.25)	3.15 (1.33)	-3.84 ***	0.46 ***	2.07 (1.28)	2.43 (1.33)	-2.19 *	0.29 **	2.35 (1.23)	2.76 (1.32)	-2.30 *	0.53 ***	7.84 ***	5.86 **
Asking support staff	3.09 (1.07)	2.73 (1.04)	2.39 *	0.32 **	2.50 (1.12)	2.45 (1.23)	0.28	0.13	3.22 (1.02)	3.22 (1.11)	0.00	0.39 **	14.64 ***	6.78 **
Observing	3.58 (0.85)	3.74 (0.66)	-2.03 *	0.66 ***	3.62 (0.93)	3.93 (0.78)	-2.78 **	0.24 *	2.79 (0.94)	2.91 (0.97)	-0.97	0.56 ***	40.20 ***	27.38 ***
Consulting written material	3.59 (1.10)	3.17 (1.14)	2.78 **	0.39 **	2.81 (1.35)	3.41 (1.25)	-4.32 ***	0.49 ***	2.78 (1.07)	2.80 (1.26)	-0.11	0.34 *	6.70 **	3.98 *
Knowledge of Performance	4.02 (0.53)	4.22 (0.46)	-3.45 **	0.55 ***	4.48 (0.54)	4.40 (0.54)	1.27	0.45 ***	3.84 (0.63)	3.98 (0.69)	-2.08 *	0.71 ***	30.67 ***	9.04 ***
History	3.55 (0.59)	3.81 (0.53)	-4.72 ***	0.67 ***	3.80 (0.74)	3.85 (0.68)	-0.70	0.49 ***	2.77 (0.65)	2.91 (0.66)	-1.38	0.35 **	74.96 ***	39.09 ***
Language	3.83 (0.61)	4.24 (0.54)	-5.52 ***	0.43 ***	3.69 (0.71)	3.98 (0.68)	-3.62 ***	0.42 ***	3.38 (0.61)	3.67 (0.65)	-3.00 **	0.41 **	17.30 ***	11.76 ***
Goals and values	3.72 (0.61)	3.70 (0.62)	0.30	0.60 ***	3.89 (0.81)	3.76 (0.77)	1.62	0.53 ***	3.40 (0.69)	3.11 (0.71)	3.35 **	0.61 ***	22.09 ***	16.03 ***
Politics	3.59 (0.65)	3.83 (0.58)	-3.20 **	0.52 ***	3.38 (0.79)	3.53 (0.79)	-2.00 *	0.58 ***	3.07 (0.64)	3.06 (0.73)	0.05	0.37 **	23.27 ***	16.54 ***
Affective commitment	3.78 (0.66)	3.72 (0.70)	0.84	0.64 ***	3.70 (0.73)	3.75 (0.74)	-.058	0.52 ***	3.23 (0.72)	2.77 (0.89)	4.39 ***	0.59 ***	38.27 ***	30.50 ***

Note: *p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

Table 2.

Correlation Coefficients between Information Seeking at Time 1, and Organisational Knowledge Domains and Affective Organisational

Commitment at Time 2 (N=207).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Asking immediate supervisor	--	0.48***	0.21**	0.23***	0.17*	0.25***	0.39***	0.36***	0.14*	0.12	0.28***	0.04	0.21**	0.06
2. Asking indirect supervisor		--	0.18**	0.06	0.25***	0.38***	0.24***	0.39***	0.02	0.03	0.23**	0.05	0.25***	0.03
3. Asking another newcomer			--	0.21**	0.21**	0.12	0.28***	0.06	0.07	0.16*	0.01	0.06	0.15*	0.09
4. Experienced co-worker				--	0.08	0.05	0.52***	0.19**	0.21**	0.33***	0.11	0.18**	0.26***	0.24**
5. Asking outside of the firm					--	0.15*	0.15*	0.12	-0.06	-0.05	0.07	-0.01	0.10	-0.04
6. Asking support staff						--	0.16*	0.42***	-0.08	-0.01	-0.05	-0.05	0.12	-0.01
7. Observing							--	0.34***	0.27***	0.32***	0.26***	0.17*	0.28***	0.20**
8. Consulting written material								--	0.05	0.18**	0.24***	0.17*	0.26***	0.20**
9. Performance knowledge									--	0.42***	0.51***	0.53***	0.36***	0.34***
10. History knowledge										--	0.56***	0.40***	0.64***	0.47***
11. Language knowledge											--	0.43***	0.53***	0.34***
12. Goals and values knowledge												--	0.33***	0.63***
13. Politics knowledge													--	0.36***
14. Affective commitment														--

Note: *p< 0.05; **p< 0.01; ***p< 0.001

four of the six mean scores increase significantly over time showing increased knowledge of performance, of history, of language, and of politics. The rank-and-file employees show significant positive changes in two socialisation outcomes: over time, they increased their knowledge of the company's language and politics. The IT professionals similarly increase their knowledge of performance and of language. However, their knowledge of the goals and values of the organisation and their affective organisational commitment decreased significantly over time.

The Effect of Information Seeking on Organisational Knowledge and Commitment

To test hypotheses 3a to 3c, stating that asking supervisors and experienced co-workers for information is most strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment, observing is less strongly related and the use of written material is the least strongly related to knowledge and commitment, correlation coefficients were first computed between the information seeking variables at time 1 and time 2, and the organisational knowledge and affective organisational commitment variables at time 1 and time 2 for the total group. In Table 2, only the coefficients between information seeking at time 1, and knowledge and commitment at time 2 are presented since similar patterns in the correlation coefficients were found at time 1 and at time 2 and also between the two time periods.

Table 2 shows that observing, asking experienced co-workers for information, and consulting written material, are the seeking options most often significantly related to organisational knowledge and commitment.

As the next step in the analysis, hierarchical regression analyses were also performed for each socialisation outcome. The variables were introduced in two steps. Firstly, the two demographic variables, gender and level of education, were included in the regression equation. Secondly, all the time 1 information seeking variables were entered into the equation. Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses.

The table shows that, in the first step of the analysis, the demographic variables explain a significant amount of the variance in the knowledge domain of performance proficiency. The level of education appears to have a negative effect on this knowledge domain.

Furthermore, the information seeking variables entered in the next step of the analysis explain a significant additional proportion of the variance in four out of the five knowledge domains (performance, history, language, and politics) and also in affective organisational commitment. The beta coefficients show that observing and consulting written material has a positive effect on two out of the six socialisation outcomes. More specifically, knowledge of performance and knowledge of organisational language are positively affected by observing, and knowledge of organisational goals and values, and affective organisational commitment are positively affected by consulting written material. In addition, asking supervisors and experienced co-workers for information has a positive effect on knowledge of organisational language and knowledge of organisational history. Finally, asking support staff for information has a negative effect on knowledge of organisational language.

These results do not support hypotheses 3a to 3c: that asking supervisors and experienced co-workers for information would be most strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment. Surprisingly, in contrast to our expectations, the results show that observing and consulting written material are the most strongly related mechanisms to the socialisation outcomes.

Finally, the total proportion of the variance explained by the various factors varies from 5% ($p<0.05$) for organisational goals to 14% ($p<0.001$) for organisational language. These proportions are in line with the results of Morrison (1993a).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, we have analysed the longitudinal effect of various sources and strategies in information seeking on the socialisation outcomes in three different situations. This has produced some interesting results.

The first set of hypotheses, stating that newcomers generally seek information from supervisors and experienced co-workers rather than from observing others, and that newcomers more often observe than ask other newcomers, support staff, or clients, family, and friends for information, was generally supported by the results. Thus, while earlier studies had indicated that individuals usually prefer to observe other people than ask outright (Ashford, 1986; Morrison, 1993b), the present findings show that it is important to distinguish between different information sources when comparing observation with direct communication.

Next, our findings show that it is also important to distinguish between various situations and type of worker. For example, we found that the junior managers in a postal and telecoms organisation more often asked their supervisors for information than did the rank-and-file employees working in a holiday resort and IT professionals. Social comparison theory may help to explain this finding. This holds that people compare themselves to people similar to them. Junior managers are thus more likely to compare themselves with their supervisors than is the case with workers in the other groups we considered because, in career terms, the supervisors are frequently only a few years senior to the junior managers. Gathering information from supervisors may therefore imply higher social costs for the other groups than for the junior managers. It is also plausible that the junior manager's supervisor's view of the organisation will be similar to his or her own, and that the junior managers will therefore approach the supervisor more often (Louis, 1990). Also, Baruch (2004) noted that for managers social networking is more relevant compared to rank-and-file employees. Further, we found that the IT professionals observe less, and approach experienced co-workers less often for information, and rely more on persons outside the organisation such as clients, family, and support staff, than do the rank-and-file and managerial newcomers. A possible

Table 3.

Two-Step Hierarchical Regression Analysis.

Organisational Knowledge Domains and Affective Organisational Commitment at Time 2

predicted from Background Variables and Sources and Strategies of Information Seeking at Time 1

$(N = 207)$

Independent variables	Knowledge of Performance		Knowledge of Organisational History		Knowledge of Organisational Language	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1						
Gender (male)	0.00		-0.04		0.05	
Education	-0.23**	0.05**	-0.09	0.03	0.08	0.02
Step 2						
Asking supervisor	0.10		0.00		0.20*	
Asking indirect supervisor	0.05		0.01		0.09	
Asking another newcomer	0.01		0.10		-0.06	
Asking experienced co-worker	0.11		0.17*		-0.02	
Asking outside the organisation	-0.02		-0.06		0.00	
Asking support staff	-0.09		-0.06		-0.23**	
Observing	0.19*		0.13		0.19*	
Consulting written material	-0.01	0.10**	0.14	0.12**	0.12	0.17***
Total Adj. R^2		0.11**		0.10**		0.14***

Independent variables	Knowledge of Organisational Goals and Values		Knowledge of Organisational Politics		Affective Organisational Commitment	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1						
Gender (male)	0.01		0.07		-0.03	
Education	-0.20*	0.02	0.05	0.02	-0.18*	0.03
Step 2						
Asking supervisor	-0.03		0.03		-0.03	
Asking indirect supervisor	0.12		0.14		0.07	
Asking another newcomer	0.00		0.07		0.04	
Asking experienced co-worker	0.11		0.14		0.14	
Asking outside the organisation	-0.01		0.00		-0.05	
Asking support staff	-0.13		-0.03		-0.08	
Observing	0.05		0.08		0.04	
Consulting written material	0.18*	0.07	0.13	0.12**	0.22*	0.09*
Total Adj. R^2		0.05*		0.09**		0.07*

Note: *$p< 0.05$; **$p< 0.01$; ***$p< 0.001$

explanation is that their type of job restricts their access to some sources of information. IT professionals usually work on assignments at a client's organisation and therefore have less opportunity to turn to organisational members with questions than the other two groups considered who generally have a fixed workplace alongside their colleagues. Moreover, this remote working by the IT professionals will limit their observation opportunities.

Furthermore, our hypotheses that the use of observation and consulting written material will increase over time, and that of seeking information from supervisors and experienced co-workers would decrease were supported. Most newcomers increased their use of observation over time, and ask persons outside the organisation, such as friends, family, and clients, more frequently for information. This finding supports the assertion of Ashford (1986) that, as tenure increases, the social costs associated with information seeking are greater. Another explanation for our finding could be the growing importance nowadays placed on clients by organisations. An increasing number of organisations expect their employees to value and take into account their clients' opinions of the services they provide or the products they deliver.

The hypotheses with respect to the effect of information seeking on socialisation outcomes were not confirmed. Although, as we expected, asking supervisors and co-workers for information were more strongly related to organisational knowledge and commitment than approaching support staff and organisational outsiders, it appeared that observing and consulting written material were even more strongly related to the socialisation outcomes. The unexpected finding that using written material is strongly related to socialisation outcomes could be explained by the fact that newcomers who use this strategy are highly motivated to integrate into the organisation. The use of written material may be an indication of conscientiousness on the part of newcomers, which has been found related to effectiveness in earlier studies. Future studies could focus on the personal characteristics of newcom-

ers that might have a determining effect on the career choice (Baruch, 2004) and on the use of sources and strategies in information seeking (see e.g., Brown, Ganesan and Challagalla, 2001; Saks and Ashforth, 2000; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). For example, it is conceivable that nonconformists and creative people will more often directly communicate in their search for information than would conformists and less creative people who may prefer to observe and consult written material, and who may be also more committed to the organisation. Previous studies have also shown that conformists tend to be more strongly committed to an organisation than nonconformists (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

Limitations of the Present Study and Implications for Future Studies and Organisational Practice

There are some limitations attached to this study that should not be overlooked. Firstly, it should be noted that some of the results of the present study may be affected by non-random sample attrition among the junior managers and rank-and-file newcomers (see Method section). The respondents from these two groups who participated only at time 1 scored slightly lower on affective organisational commitment and on organisational knowledge of history and language than those respondents who participated at both times. Among the IT professionals there were no significant differences between these two groups. This may be the reason that especially the junior managers, but also the rank-and-file newcomers, significantly increased their average score on knowledge of history and language over time. However, over time they also scored higher on the other domains of organisational knowledge for which there were no significant differences between the time 1 only group and the time1 plus time 2 group. Moreover, it is surprising that knowledge of organisational goals and values and the affective organisational commitment of the IT professionals decreased significantly over time.

A second limitation is that this study focused on three occupational groups in three different organisations. Future studies should focus on differ-

ences between occupational groups within the same organisation in order to determine whether differences in information seeking and socialisation tendencies are caused primarily by differences in the type and rank of work, or by the organisation (see e.g. Klein and Weaver, 2000) and its culture.

Thirdly, the study included only data reported by the employees themselves (through a questionnaire). Future studies should include more objective data collection, such as the actual development of the career, or data from other sources such as supervisors and other colleagues to assess the organisational knowledge of the employees. This would increase the multi-method validity of the results on the effect of information seeking on organisational socialisation.

We recommend that future studies also pay attention to the motivation of newcomers in using the various strategies and sources for information seeking. For example, why do newcomers address their colleagues and supervisors directly, in preference to observing them, and why is there an increase in the use of observation over time? These aspects were not examined in the present study.

Despite these limitations, the present study clearly shows that it is important to distinguish between the various sources in asking for information if one is researching the use and effect of information seeking on socialisation. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between the type of newcomer and/or organisation in the process of information seeking. Further, we have found that differences in using the various sources and strategies in information seeking clearly lead to differences in important socialisation outcomes, such as organisational knowledge and commitment. For example, the IT professionals who made less use of observation and asking their colleagues for information than did the junior managers and rank-and-file newcomers, and who relied more on organisational outsiders for information, score significantly lower on organisational knowledge than the other two groups. Moreover, the IT professionals' commitment and socialisation even decreased over time.

In terms of organisational practice, the results indicate that it is important to stimulate direct contact (asking questions) as well as indirect contact (observation) between co-workers because these methods of information seeking appear to have a significant positive relation with the socialisation outcomes of newcomers. Special attention should be given to newcomers who mainly work outside the organisation itself, such as in clients' organisations, since they have limited opportunities to gather information from organisational members. Consequently, they have less knowledge of the various domains of the organisation and are less committed to it. Organisations that employ professionals who work outside the organisation itself could make use of mentors, actively stimulate frequent informal contacts between colleagues, and offer in-house training in order to compensate for the lack of opportunities to observe and ask organisational members for information about how to behave and act in the organisation, since this has been shown to be a very important factor in socialisation within an organisation.

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