

# Career Research & Development

the NICEC journal: making practice thoughtful and theory practical

**Fifth John Killeen Lecture  
Understanding career decision-  
making and progression: Careership  
revisited**

Phil Hodkinson

**Does television influence young  
people's career choices?**

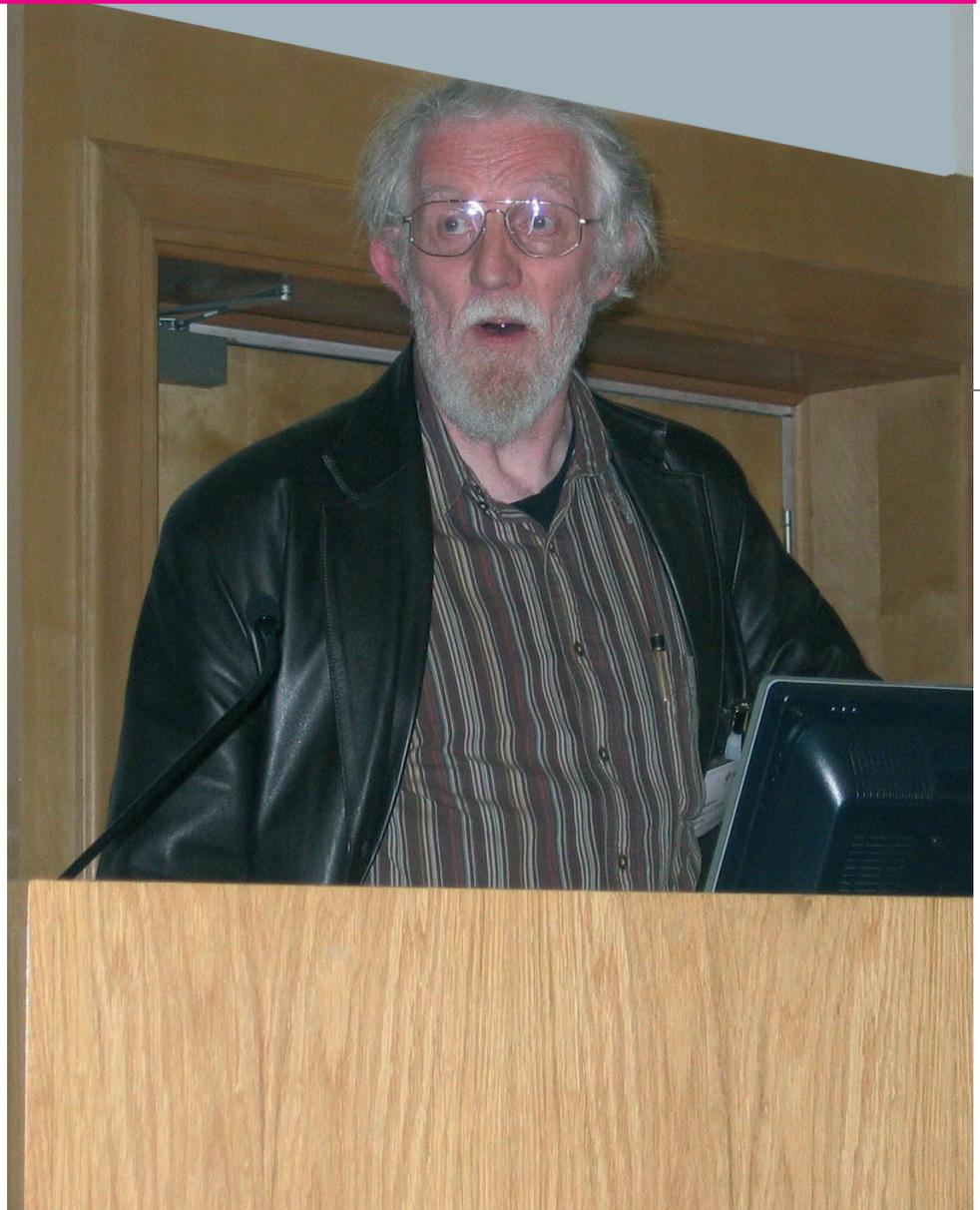
Heather Mendick and Katya  
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**Career Guidance: joining up services  
for prisoners**

Jackie Sadler and Leigh Henderson

**Careers guidance for adult work-  
based learners: why traditional  
support services are not sufficient**

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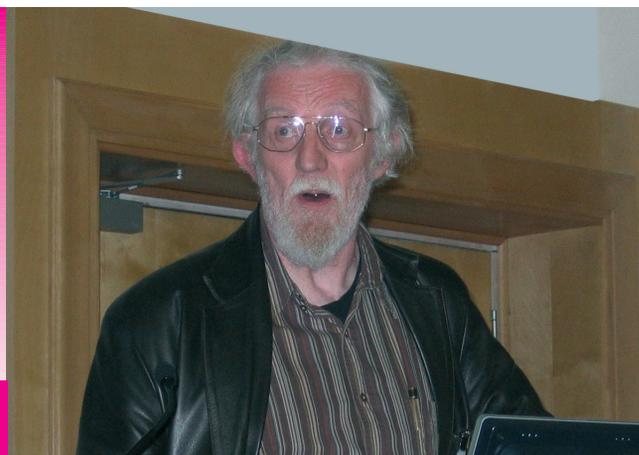


**NICEC**

National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling

# Career Research & Development

the journal of the national institute for careers education and counselling



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Contributions are welcomed. Main articles should normally be 1,000-3,000 words in length. They should be submitted to the editor by post or email at the above address. Taped contributions are welcomed.

*Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal* is published by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation, an independent educational charity founded in 1964. CRAC aims to promote the importance of and encourage active career development and career-related learning for the benefit of individuals, the economy and society.

## Aims and scope

*Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal* is published for:

- Career practitioners working in schools, colleges, Connexions/IAG services, higher education careers services, adult guidance agencies, companies, community organisations, etc.
- Trainers, lecturers, advisers and consultants working with career practitioners.
- Individuals working towards qualifications in career education, career guidance and career management.
- Government departments and business and community organisations with an interest in the work of career practitioners.

It sets out to:

- Promote evidence-based practice by making theory, policy and the results of research and development more accessible to career practitioners in their day-to-day work.
- Encourage discussion and debate of current issues in career research and development.
- Disseminate good practice.
- Support continuing professional development for career practitioners.
- Help practitioners to develop and manage career education and guidance provision in the organisations in which they work.

## Editorial – Meeting Needs

**Careers professionals continue to identify groups whose need for career education and career guidance is not being met for reasons of misguided policy, inadequate funding or inappropriate practice! This issue of the journal looks at the needs of two such groups – prisoners and foundation degree students – without suggesting any specific connection between them! It also carries two articles focusing on how needs can more effectively be met by moving practice closer to the way in which individuals think about careers and make career decisions.**

The first article is based on the 2008 John Killeen memorial lecture given by Phil Hodkinson, Emeritus Professor of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leeds. Phil chose to draw upon his research career to present his latest ideas about career decision-making and career progression. It was an opportunity to revisit the theory of careership which he, Andrew Sparkes and Heather Hodkinson developed in the early 1990s when they were carrying out a longitudinal study of the Training Credits scheme for young people. It is a theory which integrates three overlapping dimensions: the positions and dispositions of the individual, the relations between forces acting in the field(s) within which the decisions were made and careers progressed, and the on-going longitudinal pathways the careers followed. In the article, Phil explains how subsequent research by himself and others has confirmed major parts of Careership theory whilst showing the need for some modifications to other parts of it. Phil now feels that the work that he and his colleagues did on the first two dimensions was stronger than that on the third.

Phil is strongly critical of many established theories of careers work. In relation to matching personal traits to job characteristics, he says they 'were just plain wrong'! The weakness that he exposes of many traditional approaches is that they do not accord with people's actual experiences of career decision-making and progression. Careership attempts to show the interrelationship between individual agency, issues of social structure and serendipity or chance. It has implications for guidance practice and how we can design more effective helping strategies that, whilst acknowledging the limitations of guidance, could make a real difference to individuals' lives. This will involve rethinking guidance practice that is there for the comfort and convenience of practitioners.

Heather Mendick and Katya Williams are also interested in how young people respond to the influences on them and in particular the complex way in which television influences young people's career choices. Their article adds significantly to what we already know about the impact on young people of representations of work on TV from the work of Ken Fox (1995) and Sylvia Thomson and Ruth Hawthorn (2000). They argue that careers professionals need to respond in their practice to the subtle ways that TV and other media contribute to exclusion and inclusion.

Two of our articles deal with the unmet needs of particular groups who have limited access to career guidance. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) in prisons presents unique challenges for the delivery unlike any other setting in the UK. In their article, Jackie Sadler and Leigh Henderson explore the policy context, the nature of prison regimes and the potential of coherent IAG delivery to enhance the quality of the prisoner learning journey, facilitate entry into sustainable employment and reduce re-offending.

Finally, Sue Wilkinson reports on a survey of foundation degree students at the University of Portsmouth which will be of special interest to higher education careers advisory services and designers of the new adult advancement and careers service. In it she highlights some of the particular needs of adult work-based learners.

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**Anthony Barnes**  
Editor

# Understanding career decision-making and progression: Careership revisited

## The Fifth John Killeen Memorial Lecture, October 2008

*Dedicated to Geoff Ford who is very much missed*

**Phil Hodkinson**

In this lecture, I will draw upon my research career to present my latest ideas about career decision-making and career progression. Career decision-making was one of my first research interests, as part of a longitudinal study of the short-lived Training Credits scheme for young people, in the early 1990s. Based upon that work, I, Andrew Sparkes and Heather Hodkinson developed a new theory of career decision-making, which we termed 'Careership'. Since then, further research conducted by myself and other researchers has thrown further light on Careership. In this lecture, I will explain how such new evidence confirmed major parts of the Careership theory, whilst showing the need for some significant modifications to other parts of it. I will conclude by briefly identifying some issues for research, policy and practice that arise from what this research and theorising show.

### Introduction: the place of theory in the career guidance field

In the career guidance field there is a plethora of competing theories of career decision-making and career development. This plurality raises important questions about the place and purpose of theory in the field. Mouzelis (1995) identifies two kinds of theory in social science and argues that it is important to distinguish between them. They are:

- I. theory as tools for thinking
- I. theory as a set of statements telling us something new about the social world and which can be proved or disproved by empirical investigation.

The range and diversity of competing career theories demonstrates that even if some of those theories were intended to be of the second type, none has yet achieved that status. In my view, it is more helpful to understand

these theories as ways of helping us think about and understand career. Inkson (2004), following Collin (1998), implicitly makes the same point in identifying nine key metaphors through which career is understood. Though John Killeen (1996) saw theory as of the second kind, even he implicitly acknowledged aspects of theory as a means of thinking, when he classified career theories by the differing ways in which they understand the relationships between agents, action and environment.

For practitioners, policy makers and others interested in improving or justifying professional career guidance, good theories provide ways through which to evaluate and amend provision and practice. With this purpose, two questions follow: why do we need theory to help us do this and how do we choose which theory (or theories) to use?

Theories provide a general way of understanding career processes that is more than simply the accumulation of practitioner experience or the blending together of idiosyncratic stories. In fact, all policy and practice in the guidance field are informed by theory, which is not simply the province of academics. In the UK, much career guidance policy and some practice are underpinned by a folk theory of career. Politicians and civil servants fall back on this apparently common-sense theoretical position when trying to decide what to do about guidance and some educational provision. This folk theory is fluid and changeable, but often includes many of the following assumptions:

- Career decisions entail matching a person with a career opening
- Career decisions are or should be cognitive and rational
- Career decision-making is a process culminating in an event (the decision)
- Career decisions are made by the person following the career
- Good career decisions reduce educational drop out and increase employment
- Career decisions are made at the start of a linear career, or linear career stage
- Career progression is normally straightforward if a good decision has been made.

From this position it is assumed that the prime purpose of career guidance is to increase the quality of the career decision-making process, leading to an increase in the number of good decisions, which will lead to less educational wastage and reduced unemployment. Though much of this lecture will show how and why this folk theory is wrong, my initial point is to establish that those interested or engaged in career guidance cannot help but have some theoretical view about career.

As this is the case, how can we decide which of the many competing career theories we should use? A good theory should fulfil two criteria:

- It should be congruent with the ways in which career decisions are and/or could be made and the ways in which careers actually and/or could develop;
- It should provide understanding that can valuably inform research, policy and practice.

Many existing theories of career decision-making attempt to do two different things. They set out to explain how decisions are made but also to set out how decisions should be made. This may be because many people make career decisions in less than optimal ways. If we wish to help them improve these processes, it may help to know what a good career decision would look like. However, there is no point in identifying idealistic ways of making decisions that are so far removed from actual experience that they form an impossible model to strive for. This often happens when we approach career decision-making as an abstract logical process rather than examining the complex, messy ways in which such decisions are actually made. Consider this extreme example:

**'We assume that, knowing their capacities and other personal characteristics, individuals form an estimate of expected earnings resulting from each education, training and labour market option, and, taking into account their taste for each, choose the stream which offers the greatest net utility' (Bennett, et al., 1992, p13).**

This can be read in both ways. The main assumption is that this statement represents a true account about how career decisions are made. Alternatively, it can be seen as normative – career decisions not made like this are faulty and will result in less than optimal career progression. Yet this theory only works as a normative guide to policy and practice if it is also achievable. To be given credence, there should be a significant number of successful people out there who actually behaved like this.

It follows that in evaluating career theories, normative or not, we need to know how well they fit with career decision-making and development in real life. Weaker theories possess two types of fault. Either they actually get things wrong, for example because few if any decisions are made in the ways they describe (surely the case for

Bennett *et al's* view) or they oversimplify career decision-making and progression by omitting factors and influences that are crucially important. It is only once we are fairly confident about the congruency of a theory that we can ask the second question – is it of any use? In the light of this discussion I will now examine my own career theorising.

### Careership constructed: researching a Training Credits pilot scheme

My first research engagement with career was an investigation of a short-lived government scheme to train young people – called Training Credits. This scheme was introduced in a pilot form in 1991. Drawing upon the then dominant market thinking, the central idea was that each trainee would be given a credit, which was to be used to pay for their training. This was supposed to give the trainee customer power over training providers. Central to the operation of Training Credits, in the pilot scheme we studied, was the folk theory about career already outlined. The research was a small longitudinal case study, following 12 trainees for 18 months, from school and through their training. As well as repeatedly interviewing the trainees, we also interviewed networks of stakeholders involved with them, including parents, careers teachers, careers advisers, training providers and employers (Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996).

The data revealed two major failures of the folk theory of career:

1. Actual career decision-making was not rational in the ways assumed by the scheme.
2. Career progression was often non-linear and was strongly influenced by actions, events and circumstances that lay beyond the control of the young person.

As these weaknesses became clear we searched the literature, looking for a career theory that better fitted with the experiences of our subjects. All of the theories we encountered proved to be inadequate. Some, such as those based on matching personal traits to job characteristics (Holland, 1985) were just plain wrong. Not only did none of our young people make decisions remotely like that, but both they and the jobs changed over time, making the whole notion of matching unrealistic. Other theories were too partial, in ways that distorted our understanding of career processes. One problem was that most of them focussed on the individual decision maker, seeing the person as the only agent involved in making a career decision, and seeing that individual as separate from the context within which the decision was made. These person-centred theories, such as the developmental work of Ginsberg et al. (1951) and Super (1953, 1957), and the social learning theory of Krumboltz (1979) were in direct conflict with Roberts (1975) work on opportunity structures, which argued that

career was not determined by individuals at all, for people fitted in to existing deeply entrenched patterns of social inequality, which mirrored and were part of structured occupational opportunities.

Our data showed that both the personal theories and Roberts' theory were partly correct, despite the fact that they were mutually contradictory. All our young people chose and were following careers that fitted existing social and occupational structures. These were working class young people, leaving school at 16, and following working class careers. The career pathways chosen also fitted gendered occupational patterns. Helen, one of our sample, chose the predominantly male career of car body repairs. However, she was made redundant after less than a year, and then moved to a more typically female job, working in a record shop. Nevertheless, it was clear in the data that all of our sample young people were active agents in choosing and constructing their careers. What was needed, and what we could not find in the existing literature, was a theory which could explain both the structural and individual dimensions of career. Law (1981) had already identified this problem, but expressed in a different way. For him, the problem was that the personal theories worked at the micro-level of the individual, whilst Roberts' thinking worked at the macro-level of society and social structures. What was needed, he argued, was a theory at the meso-level. We had some sympathy for this view, but it did not go far enough. We could clearly see the all-pervasive influences of social and occupational structures, even at the micro-level of the individual. Our subjects were making gendered and classed decisions. Put differently, occupational and social structures were part of the individual and the decision making processes, not simply the external context within which such decisions were made. None of the existing theories we examined dealt with this, and Roberts dismissed individual agency in ways that were at odds with our data.

It was this inadequacy in existing theorising that we set out to overcome when constructing our *Careership* theory. We turned to Pierre Bourdieu to do this. (See Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, for a good introduction to Bourdieu's ideas.) Bourdieu's work resonated with our data and with the ways we were thinking about it. Like us, his work was partly concerned with refuting the assumptions of economic rationalism which lay behind the views of Bennett et al (1992) and the dominant folk theory assumptions about decision-making. Also, Bourdieu's work provided a way to go beyond seeing structure and agency as opposites or as alternative ways of thinking about the world. Finally we were drawn to the heuristic nature of Bourdieu's thinking. This was not conventional grand theory based upon a priori assumptions and logic, but theorising that was grounded in empirical data, where ideas were developed and used as necessary to explain whatever problem Bourdieu was considering at the time. This directly met our research need – to use modified versions of some of his ideas to make heuristic sense of our data. Even before Mouzelis (1995) published his

analysis, we were already seeing the need for a theory to aid thinking and understanding in relation to our data.

The *Careership* theory was published in several places (Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson, 1996; Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, Avis et al., 1998; Hodkinson, 1998). It argued that career decision-making and progression had three completely overlapping dimensions. They were the positions and dispositions of the individual, the relations between forces acting in the field(s) within which decisions were made and careers progressed, and the on-going longitudinal pathways the careers followed. I now think that our work on the first two dimensions was stronger than that on the third.

### **Horizons for action**

The central idea in *Careership* theory is that career decision-making and progression take place in the interactions between the person and the fields they inhabit. Thus, career decision-making and progression are bounded by a person's *horizons for action*. The term horizon is a metaphor taken from vision. What we can see is limited by the position we stand in, and the horizons that are visible from that position. Those horizons enable us to see anything within them, but prevent us from seeing what lies beyond them. The horizons for vision are influenced by the human eye and brain. Some people can see more than others, and humans can see much less than some animals and birds. In a similar way, career decision-making and development are enabled within horizons for action, and constrained or prevented beyond them. The horizons for action are influenced by a person's position, by the nature of the field or fields within which they are positioned, and the embodied dispositions of the person him/herself. All existing career theories acknowledge the limitations imposed by the world outside the person. However, very few of them deal with this in a satisfactory way. Bourdieu's concept of field brings a better understanding of what is too often seen as simply an external environment or labour market. Central to field theory is an understanding that social environments are dynamic, complex and made up of interacting and unequal forces. Thus, the employment field in any geographical location entails complex interactions between employers, education providers, local, regional, national and international labour markets and production relations and wider but pervasive influences of social structure (class, gender, ethnicity, age) national and international politics and policies, national and international economic climates, and globalisation. These and other forces interact with each other, so that changes to one may result in changes to others. That is, these forces are relational. The person making a career decision or developing a career is an integral part of that field. Their positions within and in relation to the field and their actions and dispositions contribute to the on-going formation and reformation of the field. The fact that few young women want careers as engineers contributes to the continuing gendered nature of employment in that field.

Within a field every player influences the relations of force but influences are not equal. This fundamental feature of career decision-making was revealed in the research data but overlooked in other career theories. Often, the greatest influence in career decision-making was not the person supposedly making that decision. Thus, Sam 'chose' to work as an apprentice in the same firm as his step-father. However, our research showed that his step-father encouraged him to do that and negotiated with his employer to create the vacancy, and Sam could not have chosen this career step if that employer had not then decided to take him on. Helen was made redundant from her car body repairing traineeship by her employer. Her next choice of a job in a record shop was strongly influenced by the refusal of another garage to give her a similar traineeship and the government-imposed rules for traineeship funding, which meant that she had to get another placement to continue her college course in car body repairing, and would lose her funding after only six weeks. The power relations between an employer and potential employee are not always so comprehensively in the employer's favour. Potential employees offering scarce and necessary skills or experience can often exert major influence over choice of position and the contract of employment. Top professional footballers are an obvious example.

The person always exerts a major influence on their own horizons for action. Bourdieu's concept of dispositions is a good way to understand that. A person's dispositions are deeply held and mainly tacit ways of viewing and understanding the world, that orientate us towards all aspects of life. These dispositions (collectively termed the habitus, by Bourdieu) develop throughout our lives, being strongly influenced by our position(s) in the world, and our interactions within it. It was easy in the research to see the significance of gendered and working class dispositions in our young sample. Dispositions are partly cognitive and discursive, but only partly. They are also embodied, being physical, practical, emotional and affective. Dispositions often become deeply ingrained, but can and do change over time. Just as a field enables some career decisions but prevents others, so do a person's dispositions. Laura wanted to become a hairdresser, but was adamant that she would not join what she still called the YTS (Youth Training Scheme), even though this was at that time the main way through which to get hairdresser training. For her, doing YTS lay outside her horizons for action. Reay et al. (2001) describe one young man considering university. His only choices were between Oxford and Cambridge, and between the various Oxbridge colleges. All other Higher Education institutions lay beyond his personal, upper middle class horizons for action. Another of our research subjects, David, had always wanted to work on a farm. These career dispositions had developed throughout his young life, as the son of an ex-farm worker who had a small piece of land and a few animals, living in a rural village. He had worked part-time on a local farm for several years before he left school. His deep love of

farming was embodied and eliminated any other career choices. He got a farming traineeship in the same farm where he already had a part-time job, taken on by a farmer who had a commitment to training for the long-term benefit of the farming industry and as a duty to help young people beginning their careers. Thus, as the Careership theorising explains, field and personal dispositions interact with each other, and the horizons for action are established through those interactions. Horizons for action can and do change, when the person's position changes, when a field changes or when a person's dispositions change.

### *The decision-making process*

If the interactions between the individual's dispositions and the field establish that person's horizons for action, that same interaction also influences decision-making within those horizons. This has already been illustrated in describing the ways in which some of our young people's career decisions were strongly influenced by others, and by the forces in the field. Yet all of them took an active part in the decision making process. At the minimum they had to say yes and could have said no to opportunities that came their way. Some were as proactive in deciding not to do things as they were in finding, constructing, choosing or accepting opportunities that became available. In theoretical terms, the interactions between position, field, dispositions and actions strongly influenced all decision-making but were not deterministic.

Given the dominance of the folk theory of decision-making within the Training Credits scheme, one thing struck us forcibly. Whilst the folk theory and the official Training Credits processes assumed that the achievable ideal was completely rational decision-making, what we found were young people going through complex decision-making processes that were at odds with those assumptions. On the other hand, every one of our sample had at least partially rational reasons for making their choices. In order to make more sense of this observation we analysed both the rational assumptions in the folk theory and the actual decisions of our sample. Rationality, as assumed/described in the official documentation for the scheme and in the folk theory that underpinned it, had several characteristics. Firstly, rational decision-making was only cognitive and discursive. It entailed the explicit logical analysis and evaluation of information – both about the self and about the labour market and/or particular possible job opportunities. Secondly, this process was assumed to be improved if all relevant factual information was gathered and analysed, that good information was sifted out from information that was less reliable, and that good decisions entailed the comparison of a range of possible job opportunities. A third assumption was that a good rational career decision was a firm choice of a pathway that would persist for a lengthy period of time. As we looked closely at these assumptions, we were struck by the parallels with what Habermas (1972) termed technical or instrumental rationality. This was most obvious in another assumption of

the folk theory – that it was the quality of the decision-making that would determine whether or not a young person found themselves in a suitable and desirable career. That is, if we get the means right, the ends will take care of themselves. Consequently, we labelled this sort of rationality *technical rationality*.

We described the decision-making of our subjects as *pragmatic rationality*. The main ways in which pragmatic rationality diverged from technical rationality were as follows. Firstly, the decisions made by our subjects were more than cognitive and discursive: they were embodied. They involved the physical, practical emotional and the affective, as well as the cognitive. In many ways, these decisions resembled the sorts of lifestyle choice that Giddens (1991) wrote about, involving, in his terms, the subconscious and practical consciousness, as well as discursive consciousness. Another way of describing the significance of the embodied nature of the decisions is that they were partly tacit. That is, the young people could not completely articulate some of their likes and dislikes. David expressed deep and consistent enthusiasm for farming, but his commitment went way beyond any rational reasons he could give. He knew that he had chosen a profession fraught with difficulties - low pay, poor job security etc – especially for someone like him, without a farm to inherit. Helen chose to train for car body repairs partly because she had enjoyed working on cars with her dad and was artistic by nature. She held an idealised vision of the future, where she did customised painting jobs on special cars.

Secondly, all the decisions in our study were based on partial information, often taken from what Ball *et al.* (2000) later termed 'hot sources' – that is, from people whom they felt they could trust, rather than from, say, official printed materials. No-one was concerned to get full information – whatever that means. Furthermore, many of them considered one opportunity only. Evaluative questions rarely entailed comparing this opportunity with possible others, but rather deciding whether or not this opportunity was what they wanted to do. Some, like David and Helen, actively worked with others to construct the opportunity itself. In David's case there was never really an actual decision – simply a lengthy process of constructing a training opportunity that was then taken up. On the other hand, Becky became a trainee dental nurse because a training provider found the opportunity and asked her if it would do. She said yes, because she saw the traineeship as a chance to find out whether or not this was a job she really wanted. Her 'choice' provides a good example of a rational component that did not fit the technically rational model. From her perspective, getting a paid traineeship to explore a possible career was not irrational.

Thirdly, as I have already shown, career decisions often involved several people, yet the technically rational view was that only the young person made a decision. In a related way, serendipity was important in many of the stories. Helen got her first traineeship, partly because the

garage owner had already employed one young woman, who was taken on as part of a package deal, to attract a very highly skilled male worker he wanted to attract. This serendipitous appointment opened the way for him to consider a second female (Helen) in a strongly male occupation.

Fourthly, the extent to which a person could influence his/her own career was strongly affected by their position in the field and the resources at their disposal. Like Okano (1993, 1995) we saw what Bourdieu calls capital as a very useful way of understanding personal resources. Bourdieu identifies three main types of capital: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital is the most straightforward, concerning financial assets. David's lack of a farm of his own was a major limitation of economic capital for his chosen career path. Similarly, Helen's need for the payments that went with the Training Credits scheme forced her to abandon her attempts to get a second garage placement and work in a shop instead. However, David and Helen had plenty of relevant cultural capital – David understood farming from the inside. Helen knew a lot about working with cars, cultural capital that had developed as she worked with her dad. Both also had valuable social capital. They knew people who could help them get the placements they wanted. David was already working on the farm, so knew the farmer, whilst Helen's garage employer knew her father well and valued the fact that Helen came from a 'good working class family'. It is important to remember that capital is relative to the field in which it is used. I lacked the social or cultural capital to become a farmer or a car repairer.

We used the adjective *pragmatic* to distinguish this sort of decision making from the technically rational official version. We hoped that the word would capture some of the purposeful and logical ways in which our young people acted, whilst making clear the differences from technical rationality.

Of all our theorising, it was pragmatic rationality that attracted most attention in the career guidance field, eclipsing some of what I regard as the more important work on horizons for action. A common line of argument was that our small sample of twelve working class trainees may well have made their decisions in the ways we described, but other people, for example the more educated and middle class, might well be expected to make decisions that were much closer to the technical rational ideals. It was this response which led Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) to suggest that there might be more restricted and enhanced versions of pragmatic rationality. I return to this point later.

### ***Routines and turning points***

The final part of the Careership theory examined the longitudinal dimensions of career and career decision-making. We were struck by the fact that most of the career literature saw career development as broadly linear

and/or developmental. Yet when we looked at our data, only some of our sample had careers that resembled linear development, even though we only followed them for 18 months. Several of our sample told stories of changes of direction, sometimes dramatic, and even for those where this was not the case, we could easily see how major changes might occur in the future. To make sense of this, we drew on some early work on career by Strauss (1962). He had argued that common assumptions of career implied one of two metaphors. One saw career as like a ladder – as linear upward progression (the developmental theories). The other saw career as like an egg – boil it, fry it, scramble it, it is always an egg. This, Strauss argued, parallels assumptions that, say, working class kids always get working class jobs (Roberts' opportunity structures). Neither metaphor captured the spasmodic, chaotic and serendipitous ways in which actual careers advanced. Put differently, these metaphors fitted careers when macro patterns were analysed, but did not work at the micro-level of individual people. Instead, Strauss suggested that individual careers were broken up by occasional turning points – times of significant personal career change. Such transformations, he pointed out, can often only be recognised with hindsight.

As well as identifying turning points, such as when Helen was made redundant from her car repair traineeship, we also examined the periods of routine that fell between such epiphanies. We argued that routines and turning points were interrelated and then went on, I now think mistakenly, to classify both. Thus, turning points, we argued, could be structural, forced or self-induced, and routines could be confirming, evolutionary, dislocating, etc. Even as we wrote, we were aware of two difficulties. Firstly, as Strauss made clear, there are no clear divisions between routines and turning points. Secondly, perception of routines and turning points was partly a matter of scale. We were studying lives over an 18 month period. What seemed a major turning point in this short period might simply look like part of a longer period of routine if a forty-year life period was looked at. Equally, what seemed like periods of routine might appear to be part of a major turning point, if a more long term view as adopted.

Having outlined our early Careership thinking, I next move the story forward. How well does that early work still stand up today, and what refinements need to be made?

### Reflections on further research

There have been several further research projects, looking at career, that were informed by Careership. Stephen Ball has conducted two, one explicitly examining the Careership ideas in the context of young people's career progression from school in London (Ball et al., 2000). The other studied the decision-making process related to

choice of university courses, also based in London. This second project did not focus on Careership, but produced findings that help reflect upon the relevance of the theory (Reay et al., 2001; Ball et al, 2002). Hancock (2006) studied 12 male adult returners to education, in Birmingham, explicitly exploring Careership. I have conducted three further research projects that informed the Careership work. In the first, Martin Bloomer and I followed 50 young people into, through and out of Further Education, in Plymouth, Exeter and Manchester (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, 2002). Later, Helen Bowman, Helen Colley and myself followed 24 full-time Masters degree students through their courses and for a further 18 months afterwards (Bowman et al, 2005). Most recently I have been part of a large research team studying the significance of learning in people's lives [1]. In this Learning Lives project we conducted detailed life histories of 120 adults, then tracked their developing lives for a further two to three years. Though career was not the prime focus, this allowed me to look at Careership over a much longer time span than any of the other studies. It also allowed me to consider the relevance of Careership for older people, for example in relation to retirement.

Taken collectively these projects permit an extensive evaluation of the Careership theory. They give a total sample size of over 300, from all social classes, of different ethnic origins, living in different parts of Britain, of differing ages, and at different periods of the last 40 years. They show people making different types of career move – school to training, to work, to further education (FE) and higher education (HE); from HE or work into Masters level HE; from FE and HE into work; from one job to another job; and from work into retirement or part-time employment. In my view this work confirms most of the Careership thinking, but points towards further important refinements of it.

The first thing confirmed is that career decisions and progression are always positioned, and the position always matters. However, it is now clear that there are different types of position that are important. In the original thinking we focussed on position within social structures, such as class, gender and ethnicity, and on position within whatever fields the individual was participating in. Both are always relevant, but they are not the same. This is because significant aspects of a person's position in a field may not be directly related to social structures. Thus, in our original study, the position of our sample young people as trainees strongly influenced their decision-making and progression. In that study, all the trainees were also predominantly working class. In the Masters degree research, we could see how very middle class students were also positioned as trainees or newcomers when they started work. Thus, position in a field and position within social structures may reinforce each other and are often interrelated but are not identical. Ball et al. (2000) showed that geographical

position was important. In their study, they showed the significance of living in London, and Reay *et al.* (2001) showed major differences between different parts of London. This geographical positioning includes local educational provision and local labour markets, but where a person lives also influences their dispositions. The Learning Lives research showed that historical positioning matters. This is often overlooked in short research studies, which focus on what is happening at the time the research is conducted. However, when we look at lives over a 40 or 50 year period we can see that what happens to careers in, say, the 1960s differs from careers in the 2000s. When I look back at the Training Credits study now, it is apparent how historically specific that particular short-lived government scheme was. Finally, the Learning Lives research also made clear that there is a generational dimension to position. This is not the same as historical position, because two different generations living at the same time may experience and act in different ways (Hodkinson with Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008).

All these different types of position are both objective and subjective. We can identify external and objective aspects of position that matter. Helen was a member of the post-baby boomer generation, working class and female. She was a trainee working in the South West of England, in the early 1990s, within the Training Credits Scheme. However position is also internal and subjective. How we perceive of our position is part of that position, and influences how we can and do act. This mirrors the central thinking within the horizons for action metaphor. Career theories that either bracket off position or treat it only as a separate external context within which people operate, are flawed. A legitimate individual focus on career must fully recognise the inherently positioned nature of that individual and career.

All this research confirms that career decision-making and progression centrally entail interactions in what we termed fields. Career is always part of unequal and complex relational interactions. Career decision-making is never an exclusively individual act. Within any career field, actions of others, be they employers, managers, admissions tutors, government agents, Trades Unions, colleagues, family and friends have a significant influence. The ability of any individual to progress is strongly influenced by the resources (economic, cultural and social) at their disposal. Any career theory that does not take account of these complex and unequal power relations is inadequate. Any theory, which assumes that only the individual him/herself makes a career decision, is also inadequate.

Ball *et al.* (2002) developed an interesting way of understanding position in a field. They showed that some of their subjects choosing university courses were 'embedded' in the HE field. That is, they already felt familiar with and understood the ways that the field and

the HE choice processes worked. In my terms, they were positioned and had enough relevant social and cultural capital to see the field as a familiar place where they could easily fit in. Others made 'contingent' choices. They were positioned too far from English HE, lacked cultural and social capital, did not understand much about how HE worked, and made very simple choices based on little information and a lack of understanding. For example, many chose the university nearest home, showing no awareness of the relative status between institutions.

All these studies confirm that neither positional factors nor the forces interacting in the field are deterministic. They also show lots of examples of serendipity, but this requires further amplification. Chance is important in people's careers, but that very serendipity is influenced by positions and by the field. One young Masters degree student got a good job because a friend found it for him. This was a serendipitous event that he had not worked for but simply reacted to. However, the event only happened because this middle class male student had been to a fairly prestigious private school, giving him social capital through the old boy network, through which this job offer came. These studies also confirm that a person's own agency - their thinking and actions - can and do exert a significant influence on their careers. It follows that Roberts (1975) work on opportunity structures is inadequate in understanding career. It is not that Roberts was wrong, for patterns of career broadly fit into patterned and unequal opportunity structures. Rather, this partial view is inadequate and seriously misleading if our purpose is to understand career, because it only shows one dimension.

My reading of this large body of empirical evidence is that it confirms the significance of dispositions in influencing the horizons for action of any individual and also the ways in which that individual thinks and acts within those horizons. In every documented case in these studies, and in many others within the studies I conducted which have not been fully documented, decision-making was more (or less!) than purely cognitive. There are always tacit dimensions, most obviously in the ways that people sub-consciously rule out many possible career options and never consider them. Career decisions are indeed embodied, though because of the tacit dimension, it is not often possible to separate out practical, physical, emotional and affective aspects.

Looking at these studies I have found no one making a career decision in ways that were not pragmatically rational. None of them were making decisions that are neither embodied nor positioned, none were making decisions uninfluenced by others, and none were completely irrational. Our work on pragmatic rationality is often misinterpreted as being one way of making decisions, a decision-making style, which can be compared to other ways of making decisions. Hodkinson and Sparkes

(1997) may have unwittingly reinforced this view, by writing about restricted and enhanced pragmatic rationality. In doing so, we focussed attention on degrees of rationality, rather than on the more fundamentally important characteristics of pragmatic rationality as a concept. Hancock (2006) followed us in adopting a continuum of types of rationality, arguing that the people in his sample used one of four different decision-making styles: systematic, enhanced, restricted and no logic. He saw enhanced and restricted as versions of pragmatic rationality, but the other two as different. Yet when I read his findings, even within his systematic group, many of the conditions for pure technical cognitive rationality are not met, and even within his single no logic example, Liam, who was 'spontaneous, impulsive and more receptive to panic' (p207), there some elements of sense in the decisions made. His processes were non-systematic, but his decisions were not entirely irrational. He drifted from training course to training course and from job to job, responding to openings that he became aware of, and that would allow him to earn money. However, he sensibly chose not to be unemployed. All four of Hancock's styles are versions of pragmatic rationality in my terms. However, differences between decision-making styles are important, and this was missing from our early theorising.

Like Hancock, Bimrose *et al.* (2008) have produced convincing evidence that adults consistently use what they term different styles of career development. These are evaluative, strategic, aspirational and opportunistic. They go on to argue that one of these, opportunistic, resembles pragmatic rationality. They show that people are largely unable to change these deeply embodied approaches. In my terms, all the people they have researched have developed deeply entrenched partly tacit dispositions towards career decision-making, which can be classified into these four types. Just as with Hancock's examples, all four styles strike me as pragmatically rational in the terms I have used here. The evaluative careerists focus primarily on 'self appraisal through the identification and evaluation of individual needs, values and abilities' (p5). Typically, this entailed a sometimes lengthy process of self-reflection and self-evaluation. Aspirational careerists 'adopt a style of decision making based upon focused, but distant career goals and their career decisions are inextricably intertwined with personal circumstances and priorities' (Bimrose *et al.*, 2008, p10). I cannot find any way in which either of these styles fails to be pragmatically rational. Neither is technically rational but both entail rational thought. Both are positioned and embodied: more than simply cognitive. The strategic careerists get closest to technical rationality and also closely resemble Hancock's identically named style group. They 'base their choices on a process of analysing, synthesising, weighing up advantages and disadvantages, and setting plans to achieve goals' (Bimrose *et al.*, 2008, p8). They are striving to make decision-making as rational as possible, but they are not technically rational. Bimrose *et al.* (2008) present no evidence that their decision-making is

not embodied – i.e. *only* cognitive. In fact, their strategic style is locked into their embodied and tacit dispositions. They are incapable of approaching career decisions in any other way. It was this sort of decision-making that Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) were crudely anticipating when we wrote of 'extended pragmatic rationality'.

There are interesting and as yet unexplored links between decision-making styles and positions in fields. Ball *et al.*'s (2002) embedded choosers resembled the strategic decision-makers of Hancock and Bimrose *et al.*, whilst contingent choosers resembled what Hancock calls restrictedly pragmatic and Bimrose *et al.* opportunistic. This suggests, in line with the Careership theory, that career styles relate to positions and fields as well as to dispositions, even for the most strategic.

For me, then, pragmatic rationality is not a decision-making style, but an important way of highlighting how career decisions are always made. The significance of retaining a view of pragmatic rationality as universal is that without it, career decision-making is too easily seen as a purely cognitive and individualistic process, bracketing off the positioned person and the field. This does not mean that all people make career decisions in the same ways, and we now need to add that there are significantly different styles of pragmatically rational decision-making.

So far, so good. Much of the original Careership thinking stands up well though it should now be enhanced and refined. However the final section of Careership, where we wrote about routines and turning points, now looks more problematic.

### Rethinking routines and turning points

It remains clear from subsequent research that career decision-making is an integral part of longitudinal career development processes. That is, a career decision is rarely an event. At the very least, there is build up to a decision and further evolution afterwards. However, it is now also clear that the attempt to understand this through the linked concepts of routines and turning points, within the original Careership theorising, was confused. Research on UK Masters degree students showed that student experiences might resemble one type of routine at the time of one interview, and a different type of routine at the next interview, without any intervening turning point (Bowman *et al.*, 2005). Based upon the Learning Lives data, it is clear that many people's lives contain significant periods of deep and significant personal change, which resemble Strauss's (1962) turning points (Hodkinson with Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008). Putting these two empirical observations together, it makes no sense to talk of such turning points and intervening routines as occurring within a short 18 month timescale. Often, a turning point itself is longer than this.

My more recent research suggests that careers are progressively constructed by positioned people, as part of their participation in various career-related fields (Hodkinson *et al.*, 2006; Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008). This happens through actions, interactions and reactions, over time. This career construction may be partly planned and intentional: evaluative, strategic or aspirational, in Bimrose *et al.*'s (2008) terms. It is always embodied and social – more than just cognitive. It is partly and sometimes largely tacit. In this sense, career is very like other aspects of a person's life. Our on-going actions, reactions and interactions influence who we are, our positions, dispositions and identities. They also influence the fields in which we participate, and in turn our actions, reactions and interactions are influenced by those fields, and by the actions, reactions and interactions of others within those fields. These processes of personal and career construction can reinforce existing dispositions and career pathways, they can contribute towards changing those dispositions and career pathways, and they can sometimes do elements of both these things at the same time.

A central part of career construction is learning. Learning as I am using the term here is informal as well as formal, and is ubiquitous in people's lives (Hodkinson, Biesta and James, 2008). 'People simply cannot avoid learning' (Saljö, 2003, p315). Learning, like career decision-making, is an integral part of living, not a separate process that takes place in a separate context. When David chose to take a placement on a farm, this was a small part of a long-term process of constructing a farming career. This construction involved actions, including taking a part-time farming job whilst still at school, asking that same farmer to give him a placement, and the actions of that farmer in offering both the part-time job and the placement. The process of career construction and learning had begun well before David took up the placement, and continued long afterwards. Whilst on the placement, as well as learning the skills of farming and the theory of farming, David continued the process of learning to be a farm worker. His actions on the farm and at agricultural college all contributed to this reinforcing career and identity construction. A significant part of this was his further embedding within an agricultural community, at work, in college and at home.

Helen's eventually failed attempt to become a car body repairer can be similarly understood. Again, her career construction and learning had begun in childhood, working on cars with her father. It continued on the garage placement and in college courses. Once she was made redundant, she attempted to keep this career going, but failed, because of the nature of the field at that time. Once she had taken a job in a record shop, she gradually and largely unintentionally learned to think of herself a shop worker, and her actions, reactions and interactions worked as part of that field to progressively construct a new career as a shop worker.

When we compare these and numerous of other examples, it is clear that constructed and learned careers can take many different forms. It is also clear what we cannot understand this on-going process of career construction without fully integrating the other parts of Careership thinking – positions, dispositions and fields. This later work on learning as a central process within career construction led me to revisit Krumboltz's (1979) work on a social learning theory of career development. Even though I have belatedly accepted his focus on learning, I still find his theorising partly unsatisfactory. He saw the individual as separate from and interacting with other people and contexts, and learning through those interactive processes. There was a failure to understand the positioned nature of the individual, and that the person is an integral and influencing part of their fields. Also, Krumboltz's view of learning was predominantly cognitive, individual and disembodied, whilst I see learning as embodied and social. These problems led to a playing down of structural issues in Krumboltz's work. Apart from Krumboltz, it is Law (1996) who has consistently focussed on career learning. My more recent thinking is broadly consistent with his work, but with differences. Like Krumboltz, Law emphasises learning as an agentic process, and whilst not wrong, underplays informal, tacit learning and learning's structural dimensions. This may be partly because he is concerned with how people can be helped to learn about career, whereas I see learning as an inherent and often tacit part of career construction and development.

When we examine lives over a long period, it is apparent that careers are often non-linear. Sometimes lives change dramatically and so can careers. One major study that showed this was Arthur *et al.* (1999). They examined the career life histories of 50 adults, and found many people had gone through significant career changes, sometimes more than once. The Learning Lives data tells a similar story (Hodkinson, with Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008). Whilst all this work combines to undermine the folk theory of career progression, the ways in interpreting these career changes vary. Arthur *et al.* (1999) combine two ideas. The first is an argument that career is essentially developmental, related to the well-known work by Super (1980, 1990). The second is that they are evidencing a new social phenomenon of post-modern times, the boundaryless career (see also Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Littleton *et al.*, 2000). I find both arguments unconvincing. The developmental argument breaks down when Super (1980, 1990) and Arthur *et al.* (1999) argue that though development is a series of stages, those stages can occur in a different order for different people, depending upon circumstances. As soon as they do that the central value of development as an idea is undermined. What they are left with, it seems to me, is the truth that, at any one time our career is influenced by our past lives, in ways that enable and constrain future career actions. Rather, it is an inherent part of thinking about career and an on-going process of

construction and learning. Furthermore, career development theorising still retains what Strauss (1962) termed the ladder metaphor of career. It is just that they now see many interconnected ladders, rather than just one. This metaphor still does not capture 'the open-ended, tentative, exploratory, hypothetical, problematical, devious, changeable, and only partly unified character of human courses of action' (Strauss, 1962, p.65). Strauss's (1962) notion of occasional major turning points further captures the non-linear nature of many careers.

Arthur *et al.* (1999) use boundaryless careers to explain the non-linear nature of career. This is unsatisfactory. I have made clear that career is influenced by historical position. Patterns of career now are different in some respects from those in the past. However, there is an empirical problem with the way in which Arthur *et al.* write about boundaryless careers, which they see as a new post-modern phenomenon. Even within their own data there are people going through significant career changes decades ago, and the Learning Lives data shows the same (Hodkinson with Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008). Put differently, there is data which shows that occasional significant career changes, turning points, were important in people's lives before so-called post-modernity. Now, as earlier, there are also individual careers that remain largely unchanged for long periods of time. Then as now, changes could be dramatic for some people. Strauss (1962) was writing about the unpredictability and changeability of individual careers in the 1950s. Turning points, therefore, are not a recent post-modern phenomenon. There may well be more turning points in a historical period when change is increasingly rapid, but the post-modern case is highly exaggerated. Consequently, boundaryless careers cannot account for all the substantial non-linear changes in people's careers. A further problem with the term 'boundaryless' is the implication that there can be careers with no boundaries. This conceals the on-going significance of horizons for action: of position and social structure. It may be true that many people face wider and less obvious career choices than in the past (Giddens, 1991), but those choices are always bounded. Thus, for constructing a valuable career theory, both developmentalism and boundaryless careers are unnecessary complications that are seriously misleading.

### Implications for research, practice and policy

I have showed that a modified and extended version of Careership is a way of understanding career that is supported by an increasingly large and diverse body of empirical evidence. It is now time to address my second question for the evaluation of a theory as a way of thinking – is it of use? This will always be a judgement made by those who read the theory, not by those who write it. All I can do is outline some of the ways in which Careership might help us in three contexts: research, practice and policy.

### Research

The main value of Careership for research may be in warning about the dangers of leaving important aspects of career out of an investigation. Thus, if we only look at the person making a career or career decision and do not examine the fields where that career is developing, we risk distortions and misunderstandings. Similarly, if all we examine are the external conditions where careers are constructed but ignore individuals, the opposite happens. If we investigate career decision-making as a fixed time snapshot rather than as a longitudinal process, it is too easy to focus on a career decision as an isolated event. Even if we adopt a longitudinal perspective but only look backwards at what went on before an eventual decision, we may miss the fact that career construction continues after a choice has been made.

We have to simplify reality to research it, and all research has to decide what it can do and what it will leave out. The key is to be aware of the significance of what lies beyond the direct scope of any methodology adopted. If all we do is life histories with 20 adults, aged between 50 and 60, it is important to remember: that career does not finish for many people until well into old age (Ford, 2005; Hodkinson *et al.*, 2008) so that there is always a future to career as well as a past; that these people are part of one generation and may share other positional characteristics which influence their careers; that people re-story the past in the light of the present, which may lead some people to tell more coherent, rational narratives of their career than they experienced as that career was actually progressing; and that other actors may have had a significant influence on a career that is not always recognised by the person telling us their story. Careership theory can help those researching careers to be more aware of the significance what may be bracketed off in this way.

The theory also suggests some valuable approaches to researching careers and to interpreting the data that is collected. Detailed, longitudinal case studies help reveal career complexity, as do studies which examine significant others in relation to an individual whose career is researched, and/or the nature of the fields in which that career has developed. In analysing data, the Careership theory points to important things to look for, some of which may not be obvious on first reading the data. For example, people rarely talk explicitly about social class, ethnicity or gender, but data can and should be examined for evidence of such structural and positional factors.

### Practice

Theory as a way of thinking can never tell practitioners what to do. Guidance practice is complex and there are few universally applicable guides. However, in the current folk-theory dominated policy context, there is one exception to this lack of universal rules. Career guidance works best when the guidance practitioner builds from the

perspective of the client. This is a central principle in much of the guidance field. What Careership can do is help remind practitioners why this matters. Any guidance intervention that lies too far beyond the horizons for action of the client will be dismissed. Avoiding this pitfall requires accurate and relevant knowledge of the fields (current and aimed for) but also the ability to fit within the dispositional aspects of a person's horizons, including any embedded career styles. Attempts, for example, to impose government-determined objectives will fail if they do not square up with those client dispositions, as will attempts to impose ways of making career decisions that a client is unwilling or even unable to adopt. Telling some truths about the occupational field may fail if the client is unable to accept them. This does not mean that guidance should always accept the status quo, or that guidance cannot help people change.

If Careership cannot show a practitioner how to conduct a guidance session, the theory can help us think of the role of guidance in currently unconventional ways. For example, we can see guidance as a valuable means of enhancing career-related learning and career construction. It can help people learn more about themselves, about the occupational fields they can consider, and about the processes of job entry and progression. This sort of learning can help people change their horizons for action, by helping them modify their dispositions and positions, and to know the field better. Part of this may well involve changing self-knowledge, for example through a process of narrative construction. Career guidance can also help clients become more agentic. One of many shared findings between some of my research and that of Arthur *et al.* (1999) is that those people who currently see their careers as personally successful and valuable are more likely to have been proactive in developing those careers. Alheit (1994) similarly shows how unemployed young Germans who actively worked for a job were both happier and more successful than those who were more passive. Interestingly, in his study it was the young women who were more proactive than the young men, reminding us once again, that agency is positioned and structured. Bimrose *et al.* (2008) reinforce the value of proactivity of two types, pointing out that people using more evaluative or strategic career styles are also more likely to be successful, in their own terms. The Learning Lives research showed that personal narrative construction can make agency more or less likely. In any given situation, narratives of hopelessness and passivity narrow the horizons for action in ways that significantly reduce agency, whilst narratives of realistic hope and proactivity can have the opposite effect. Thus, though we must continually recognise external inequalities in a person's horizons for action, guidance can help some clients learn to become more agentic.

Guidance can be legitimately concerned with career reinforcement, rather than change. Whether there has

been a significant change in a client's dispositions and horizons for action or not, career guidance can help a client operate more effectively in the chosen occupational field. It can help people develop and improve their strategies and actions, by helping them learn more about selection processes and CV enhancement, for example. Guidance can help people avoid strategic mistakes, like not studying sciences at A-level whilst wanting to be a doctor.

Much of this fits quite closely with much traditional good guidance practice. Careership does not suggest radically new ways of working. Rather, it reinforces some key guidance approaches and gives a coherent explanation as to why they are important. This matters because these traditional approaches have been frequently under threat from folk-theory driven policy and management.

Careership also points to limitations of the impact of guidance. This is because no matter how well guidance is done there will be numerous other factors and forces involved in career construction that exert greater influence. The research and the Careership theory suggest that guidance will be more effective when working with the grain – working in synergy with some other significant influences on a particular client's career. The ability of a guidance practitioner to pull off such synergy depends partly upon the horizons for action of a particular client, but also upon the ability of that adviser to pick up as much as s/he can about the client's positions and dispositions early in a careers interview, and to build upon them. As someone who has never worked as a guidance professional, I find this skill breathtakingly impressive. Even so, there will be occasions when things fail, no matter how well the guidance is done. Good guidance practice should be informed about its limitations as well as about its potential, not least to minimise the stresses and pressures of unrealistic expectations.

### Policy

Given the directions of British, European and international policies towards career guidance (OECD, 2004), the Careership theory has three uses. The first is to show that the folk theory and many of the policy assumptions associated with it are plain wrong. The second is that Careership can help explain why it is wrong, and help identify some of the problems inherent in its continued dominance. The third is to provide thinking upon which better guidance policy approaches could be partially based.

Much of what is wrong about the folk theory has already been examined, but further points must be made. As the empirical evidence shows and Careership explains, there is no single good or correct way to make a career decision, and whether or not a career decision is a good one is always a matter of value judgement, which can only be made with hindsight – once we know how the subsequent career developed. Furthermore, as guidance is more likely

<sup>1</sup> The DOTS framework suggests that there are four broad aims for careers work (Decision learning; Opportunity awareness; Transition learning; Self-awareness). These are also seen as the learning outcomes of careers education and guidance activities.

to succeed when in synergy with other forces and influences, so the more successful guidance is the more invisible it becomes. When we add that careers may fail despite the very best guidance inputs, it is clear that guidance provision cannot be judged, as the folk theory suggests, against degrees of educational and employment success. Beyond this I have already explained how and why Careership theory shows that the folk theory is wrong. Here I will summarise some key elements. The first is the sheer complexity and partial uncertainty of career decision-making and career progression. Secondly, career decision making is positioned, social and embodied, influenced by horizons for action which are both subjective and objective. Decision-making is neither a technical logical process, nor simply a matter of getting and processing accurate information. Thirdly, guidance only works when it adapts to the positions and dispositions of the client, not that of a policy maker. Fourthly, career decision making and career progression are much more than individually driven processes, always involving other people, other agencies and organisations, and social and economic inequalities. Fifthly, both people and fields change over time, in partly unpredictable ways, so that career decision-making is not a process of matching person to situation. Careership thinking, backed up by empirical data, shows that setting frameworks, targets and funding for guidance provision as if the folk theory is correct is the equivalent of asking chemists to turn base metal into gold.

No research, no matter how good, can tell us what a guidance policy should be. Researchers are not experts in policy construction or policy implementation, which are as complex as are careers. Consequently, I will restrict myself to four principles.

1. Career guidance can play a valuable role in many people's lives, helping them take more control over their own futures. This may result in more productive employment, but increasing employment should not be the major rationale for such provision.
2. Career guidance entails intervention into horizons for action - recognising and responding to partly tacit dispositions in relation to accurate and detailed understanding of the labour market and relevant occupational fields. This is high skilled professional work and requires professional conditions of service including initial and in service education and training.
3. Attempting to manage career guidance through performance outcomes will distort and often damage practice. Effective policy needs non-outcome based ways of helping guidance providers maximise the chances of high quality provision within their services. Inspection of facilities and

procedures is one way to provide accountability, but this will only work if the inspections and inspectors fully understand careers and what guidance can do. If inspections are based upon the folk theory, they will do damage.

4. No politician can be expected to understand career decision making, career development or guidance. That understanding must come from a dedicated stable group of civil servants, and/or from a powerful professional body representing the whole guidance community, not just specialised bits of it. Unfortunately, in the current English context, both of these things look extremely difficult to achieve.

### Conclusion

The prime purpose of this lecture was to update the original Careership theory, and I have done that to the best of my ability. My second purpose was to discuss the nature and significance of theory in the career guidance field. I have argued that career theories are ways of thinking, which can be judged by their congruence with actual career decision-making and development and by their utility. I have shown that this modified version of Careership presents a valuable way of thinking about career, which better fits what research tells us than do many other currently extant theories. Some of these theories are largely wrong, whilst others are too partial and consequently unintentionally misleading. I finished by giving some pointers to the uses of Careership in informing research, practice and policy.

Careership and the research that underpins it show that traditional approaches to person-centred guidance provision remain fundamentally sound, even though it also suggests value in adopting a more relational and positioned approach to thinking about career and guidance. The research data also show that guidance has made significant contributions in some people's lives, and show far more numerous points in the lives of others where guidance could have been of value. Career guidance works, despite the fact that many policies that are supposed to support it blatantly do not. Keep up the good work, and don't let the bastards grid you down!

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# Does television influence young people's career choices?

Heather Mendick and Katya Williams

**Robbie Coltrane has a lot to answer for. Because it is gutsy TV cop dramas such as *Cracker* that hook students on to the science of how the mind works - particularly the criminal variety. (Williams, 2002)**

Since *Cracker*, the idea that young people's career choices are influenced by the media, and by television drama in particular, has become widespread. In 2005 North East Wales Institute of Higher Education (2005) made headlines blaming *Coronation Street's* Mike Baldwin's abrasive management style for a lack of factory recruits. More recently, *CSI* and *Waking the Dead* have been linked to increased enrolments in forensic science degrees (Meikle, 2007).

Research also supports this link. For example, the study by Louise Archer and Becky Francis (2006) on British Chinese pupils found that TV was the second most named source of aspirations after parents, more so than careers advice or work experience. However, there is surprisingly little research that looks directly at how depictions of work and workers in television drama influence young people's career choices and aspirations. This was what we set out to explore in a study funded by the British Academy.

We were concerned that journalists produced a simplistic idea of the relationship between television images and viewers' identities. This is one that Stuart Hall (1973, p.5) observed is common in research too:

**Though we know the television programme is not a behavioural input, like a tap on the knee-cap, it seems to have been almost impossible for researchers to conceptualize the communicative process without lapsing back into one of other variant of low-flying behaviourism.**

Hall wrote this in the context of the controversial relationship between screen violence and 'real' violence. He stressed that he did not want to deny any significance to TV violence but instead:

**...to insist that what audiences were receiving was not 'violence' but messages about violence. Once this intervening term has been applied, certain consequences for research and analysis follow: ones which irrevocably break up the smooth line of continuity offering itself as a sort of 'natural logic', whereby connections could be traced between shoot-outs at the OK Corral, and delinquents knocking over old ladies in the street in Scunthorpe. (p.8)**

Similarly, we worked with the understanding that what people receive when they watch *CSI* is not 'forensic science' but messages about forensic science and, in so doing, we hoped to disrupt 'commonsense' connections between attractive, glamorous Americans with test tubes and chemicals in *CSI* laboratories and young people applying to study forensics in the UK.

We were also troubled by the assumption that everyone watching a particular programme understands it in the same way. This constructs the audience as homogeneous and undifferentiated. However, we know that career choices and aspirations are proscribed by social class, gender and race/ethnicity (Ball *et al.*, 2000), and that these influence the ways that people watch TV (Ruddock, 2007). In particular, we wanted to explore whether the characters and narratives of TV drama can provide the kind of connection and 'hot knowledge' (Archer *et al.*, 2005) necessary for young people to make non-traditional career choices.

Thus we started with three questions:

- How do young people read the narratives of work and workers in TV drama?
- How do these readings intersect with their identity work?
- How are these processes of *reading* and *identity work* classed, raced and gendered?

The term *reading* captures how watching TV is 'an active process of decoding or interpretation, not simply a passive process of 'reception' or 'consumption' of messages' (Morley, 1992, p.76). Similarly, the term *identity work* captures the idea of identity as something we do (and are done by) rather than something we are. Central to this approach is that our notions of who-we-are are always storied: 'Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self' (Hall, 1991, p.49). It is those stories through which people construct themselves in relation to work that we explored in this study. With the growth of the 'reality' TV and docudrama genres, the boundaries of TV drama are increasingly blurred; drama techniques are being used in previously distinct areas such as advertising and TV acts as a hub for multi-platform programmes such as *Big Brother* and *The Apprentice*. This 'offers the opportunity to examine the ways in which television drama – in all its diversity and complexity – can be theorised as a source of public narratives' (Thornham & Purvis, 2005, p.28).

## Research Methods

We carried out 18 focus-groups and 31 individual interviews with students in their final two years of compulsory schooling in three schools that we have called Lawndale, Shermer and Liberty. All are mixed comprehensive schools in England. Lawndale is in a rural location in the South, Shermer in London and Liberty in a small city in the Midlands.

In focus-groups:

- We showed participants eight TV images of work (in homes, hospitals, offices and criminal investigation) and asked them whether they recognised the shows, if they wanted to work in these environments and what they thought of the jobs.
- We asked participants about their consumption of TV drama and of TV more broadly, focusing on what they thought about people working in the programmes they watched.
- We asked participants about their experiences of work (through school work experience and part-time work), their career aspirations and the influences on their employment choices.
- We showed participants extracts from *CSI*, *The US Apprentice*, *EastEnders* and *Commando*. We asked them what they thought about each, whether they had watched these shows, whether they liked or identified with anyone in them and what they thought of the characters and their working environment.

In the interviews, we asked participants:

- About what, when, how, why and with whom they watch TV, including their TV likes and dislikes.
- To discuss what they think would be happening in two pictures, featuring groups of people at a meeting and involved in construction, if they were stills from TV shows.
- To invent their ideal TV show featuring work.
- About their career aspirations and the influences on these.
- To choose what they do and do not want from work from the following list of factors: money, travel, status, creativity, friends, making a difference, helping people, interest, enjoyment, variety and routine.
- To describe themselves.
- To describe their social class and ethnicity and to discuss whether these and their gender make any difference to their life.

We analysed the focus-group data thematically using NVivo and the interview data using a narrative approach. More detail of our methodology and findings can be found

on the project website ([www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/ipse/research-projects/current-projects/p75.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/ipse/research-projects/current-projects/p75.cfm)). In this article we concentrate on providing an overview of our findings by looking in turn at the three research questions with which we started.

## How do young people read the narratives of work and workers in TV drama?

Young people use TV as a learning tool, a source of information, particularly about social relationships and unfamiliar lifestyles. TV is not their sole source of information, but is treated as equally credible to unmediated sources, and the 'real' and the 'mediated' are often blurred and paired in their talk. For many, TV offers more than entertainment, it offers a way to visualise 'other' lives both in terms of work and broader society and the opportunity to 'try on' different environments, including possible careers. Although, as in this quotation from Paul Macock (participants chose their own pseudonyms), they rarely draw causal relationships between their viewing and their aspirations:

**[The Bill] doesn't really make me like want to be a police officer. But it's just good to see like how it works and stuff like that so like if like your GCSEs don't work or something like that it's like have an idea of how things work as well. So it's just like so if you did want to go into [police work], you know how things work and stuff like that really. [Int: Right. So you do actually watch TV to think about how different lives are?] I don't think you like watch TV to think about it, I think you watch TV for like the fun of it and you just automatically like think about how things work and stuff like that really.**

*(Paul Macock, Lawndale, White, male, middle-class, focus-group)*

The ways young people read narratives are based in: assessments of *authenticity* and processes of identification. As other studies have shown, young people's search for TV authenticity is really important to them (Hill, 2004). They are aware of genre, channels, format requirements, narrative devices and other conventions. Using this knowledge, they calibrate their response to representations of work, judging their 'truth' and 'reality'. For example:

**It's not what it seems [the army]. ... Because on the adverts they show that more fun stuff, but in real life it's not. [Int: So how do you know the difference between the advert and real life?] Because you see like in videos of it. Some people taking photos of it, in war, like in Iraq. ... [Int: So what do you think about that kind of difference?] It's wrong. They should show the real stuff and see what's really going on.**

*(Petrov Jerkoff, Liberty, British, male, working-class, focus-group)*

They also compare unmediated (from part-time work, work experience, friends' and family's employment) and mediated experiences of occupations and some draw distinctions between TV and real-life careers, stating desires to be a TV, not a real, doctor or to work in an office only if Ricky Gervais is your boss (Williams & Mendick, 2008).

Identification and dis-identification are associated particularly with soaps and soap-like programmes (such as reality-gameshow *The Apprentice*). In these cases the job-role and instances of the job within the show blur. The main points of identification are around the contrasting positions of being ordinary and so authentic, as discussed above, or being someone who stands out, as in this extract:

**[Prison Break's] good because like it's just sort of different kind of way [Michael Scofield] thinks. It's not like a typical gangster guy who doesn't know what it's like. He's sort of clever. It's like, you just need to watch the whole series to understand it ... It's not like oh you know what he's going to do next.**

*(Dean, Shermer, Serbian, male, middle-class, focus-group)*

The main points of dis-identification are around age, North American-ness, social class and perceived freakishness. Thus, being distinctive is positively valued but being too distinctive and/or distinctive in the wrong way is negatively valued.

### How do these readings intersect with young people's identity work?

TV as a learning tool, mediated through assessments of authenticity and processes of identification, is linked to identity work. TV is used to make evaluations of other people and of self-in-relation to others which involve value judgements around class, race, nationality, gender and sexuality, and about what is normal and like us. TV sets expectations that include and exclude. For example, for Emily-May TV sets up expectations about businesswomen that she feels would rule out less confident women from this area:

**Especially when you watch lots of telly, you probably think all businesswomen are pushy women. If they're quite shy or something, even though they might be really good at it, they might not want to.**

*(Emily-May, White British, female, middle-class, interview)*

This extends beyond careers and onto social groups. Emily-May explains how her perception of stallholders is related to their TV portrayal and particularly to Stacey in *EastEnders*:

**Like sub-consciously you pick up quite a lot I think. ... like Stacey works on the market stall and stuff like that, so if you see someone on a market stall then you might like presume that they are like the character in *EastEnders*, whereas they're obviously not. [Int: Like in what way do you think?] Well not like she is anymore, but like she used to be a couple of years ago, like would get around and chav.**

Stacey Slater is read in classed and gendered terms; the phrases 'getting around' and 'chav' feed into constructions of working-class women's sexual and behavioural excess (Skeggs, 2004). This link between her appearance, sexual behaviour and career prospects is also made by Shanz (Shermer, British Asian, female, interview) who describes Stacey as 'not going anywhere. She's just working and some of the stuff she wears is like, wow'.

However, TV is not entirely reproductive; when some connection and authenticity is felt, it allows for the 'trying on' of different selves and lives. This is important for career choice since young people want work to provide both 'traditional' factors such as money and status and factors such as enjoyment, interest, creativity, variety and making a difference which suggest a fashioning-of-self through work. This tying of lifestyle to work is related to neoliberal demands that work be a site of self-actualisation (Rose, 1999). Within this context, TV is resource for deciding if you 'fit' particular jobs. For example:

**I've wanted to be a vet since I was 3. ... my nan went and got me a dog and I remember the first trip to the vets, I was really excited because I'd never been there before. ... and then I used to watch *Animal Hospital*. That was on with Rolf Harris presenting it. And I always found that really interesting to see all the animals and stuff and it looked quite exciting, stuff like that. So I've always wanted to be a vet, really.**

*(Philop, Lawndale, White British, male, middle-class, interview)*

Similarly, when asked to imagine her ideal TV show featuring work, Ruth (Shermer, Ethiopian, female, intermediate-class, interview) invents a version of *The Apprentice* for stockbrokers, her intended career, in which 'the experienced person creates activities and stuff for other people who are starting to do stockbroking, and then through them other people like me watching it can see how'.

### How are these processes of reading and identity work classed, raced and gendered?

Young people's identifications are often linked with characters' class positions and job statuses. They are keen to position themselves as 'normal' and 'in the middle' in

relation to class indicators. Although they are aware of status differentials and resist low status work, as in the reactions to Stacey Slater discussed above, they also reject the snobbery, arrogance, 'posh'ness and excessive wealth of businesspeople like *The Apprentice's* Alan Sugar and Donald Trump. With one exception, our participants aspire to professional careers. TV drama contributes to the normalising of middle-class trajectories for 'repetitive patterns of representation have the ideological effect of naturalizing certain perspectives on the world' (Ruddock, 2007, p.75).

Race and ethnicity remain unspoken in many focus-groups. A few minority ethnic participants identify with characters from similar backgrounds such as Indian James Caan (*Dragon's Den*) or Colombian *Ugly Betty*. At Lawndale, a predominantly White rural school, anti-American feeling is quite intense. Students position themselves as English and culturally opposed to what they deem American arrogance and stupidity. In the interviews, many ethnic minority participants spoke of television viewing as part of their cultural identity work (watching sport, films, news and soaps from their 'home' country), as a way of connecting with parents and of being part of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983).

Identification is rarely cross-gender. The two focus-group instances involve young women identifying with camp men (*Ugly Betty's* Justin and Marc). Women identifying with male characters are more common in interviews. For example, Sandra Slater (Lawndale, White British, female, middle-class, interview) identifies with male characters Gregory House and Will Smith, female character Temperance 'Bones' Brennan and the mixed gender staff of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*. Intelligence rather than gender matters to her. Cross-gender identification is more common among women than men and women's aspirations were less 'stereotypical' than men's in line with other research (Francis, 2002). Childcare, nursing and fashion are still seen by young men as 'feminine' and, rather than seeing TV examples of men in these jobs, such as nurse Charlie in *Casualty*, as offering a counter-position, they question their hetero/sexuality.

Our data indicate that TV drama is one resource among many that makes cross-gender choices possible, through imaginative identification, the 'trying on' of selves. The strongest example of this was in aspiring police officer Anything's (Shermer, British Bengali, female, intermediate-class, interview) discussion of *The Bill*. She likes DI Sam Nixon's power: 'she's the woman in the actual field, it's like the most in charge. She's actually got the most power basically over everyone. ... you know how usually they say men are higher up, but in there she's like the highest ... I would definitely be happy with that.' However, her favourite character is PC Sally Armstrong: 'she's completely like us but then she's working for the police force so really, it's like she's two different people'. Identification with Sally seems to make it possible for Anything to see herself as a police officer.

## Conclusions

In summary, young people use TV drama as a learning resource, alongside unmediated material, to make evaluations of other people and of their self as they relate to others. This is important for career choice since young people want work to provide a lifestyle that suits them. Thus, TV is a resource for deciding if you 'fit' particular jobs. However, young people's relationships to TV drama are complex: the processes of identification and of trying on of selves and environments differ between people, characters and programmes and interact with other aspects of identity. TV has a role *both* in normalising middle-class professional lifestyles and excluding other lower-class groups *and* in helping people to aspire to non-traditional occupations.

In light of this we would suggest that careers education and counselling engage with the multiple sources of information that young people use to explore their career possibilities. In particular, TV and other media could be helpfully incorporated into this process. But this needs to be done critically in ways that engage with how these representations contribute to processes of inclusion and exclusion (see Buckingham, 2007).

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# Career Guidance: Joining Up Services for Prisoners

Jackie Sadler and Leigh Henderson

This article is based on Equal funded work carried out by NICEC Fellows Jackie Sadler and Leigh Henderson in three prisons in the East of England, where IAG in custody is provided by Tribal, and one in the South West supported by a Tribal Area (now Regional) Manager, Cheryl Westbury. It seeks to draw out some of the challenges of providing information, advice and guidance in prison and the development work carried out under the Equal project and subsequent experience. The project was managed by Tribal under Equal funding initially and subsequently as part of the LSC East of England Test Bed programme.

## Background

Learning and skills services in prisons are delivered by the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), with DCSF, DIUS, DWP and the Ministry of Justice being the key stakeholders. Delivery is funded by the LSC and the Youth Justice Board; responsibility will pass to the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Funding Agency in 2009. The prime operational focus comes from the LSC, National Offender Management Service - including HM Prisons Service and the National Probation Service – and the Youth Justice Board.

OLASS is delivered through regionally contracted providers. IAG services are not separately contracted in all regions, though they are in the East, London, South West, and West Midlands regions. A third round of OLASS contracting, 'OLASS3', is under way. Against the background of regional contracts for nextstep and the forthcoming adult advancement and careers service, IAG in custody will be separately contracted across England from August 2009.

The prison system faces many challenges in reducing re-offending. Importantly, the highest priority for any prison governor is security; education and training support has to be considered in that context. It is also important to understand that there are significant differences between prison categories. In all but high security establishments, rapid turnover of prisoners ('churn') is a serious impediment

to providing progressive programmes for prisoners. In one local prison, the average length of stay is 42 days of which just nine are in education. A similar average length of stay is being experienced in an open prison, where hitherto a longer term approach to rehabilitation at the end of a sentence was the norm.

Only around five per cent of prisoners are women and they have significantly different needs to most men. Most are victims of abuse or have been sex workers, or both, and a high proportion have mental health difficulties. Many are looking to return to family life rather than to full time employment. Baroness Corston's report for the Home Office<sup>1</sup> suggested a radically different approach to helping female offenders reintegrate into society.

The reality for many prisoners on entering custody is to address their immediate priorities which may include family, housing, benefit or drugs issues. The prison service has identified seven 'pathways', including learning and skills. Two additional pathways for women are being developed for victims of abuse and sex workers. As one Head of Learning Skills (HoLS) puts it, 'we are managing a special needs community'. IAG is offered at induction into the prison, but other issues need to be addressed before a prisoner can really focus on their learning and skills development needs.

## The offender learning journey

The vision for learning and skills provision for offenders in custody was set out by the Government in 2006<sup>2</sup>. The aim is to introduce a 'campus model' of joined up delivery focused in delivering a coherent offender learning journey from 2009. The West Midlands and East of England were nominated as 'Test Bed' regions. The work carried in the three prisons in the East formed part of the Test Bed development programme.

The need for a coherent approach is illustrated in Figure 1 below. Each prison has a Head of Learning and Skills (HoLS) who manages and co-ordinates its learning and skills provision. The prison's role in managing the OLASS delivery is critical to achieving a more joined up approach – and in advocating better collaborative working with Nextstep, Job Centre Plus and voluntary and community organisations. There is a trend for HoLS posts to be combined with others to exercise a wider remit – usually called Head of Reducing Reoffending - with consequent benefits for coherent responses to the learning and skills needs of prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> Corston J., A Review Of Women With Particular Vulnerabilities In The Criminal Justice System, Home Office, 2007: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report>

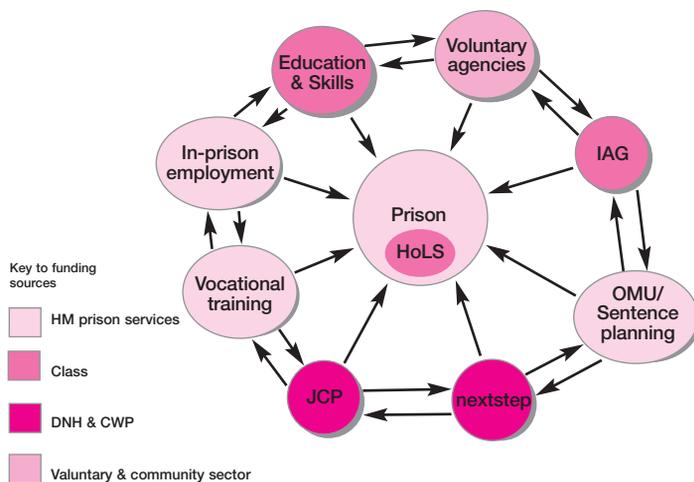
Co-ordinating the work of up to 30 agencies is a daunting task. Most provide IAG on their own area of expertise, such as personal finance, family relationships, drug and alcohol abuse or personal behaviour issues. The result can be very confusing for prisoners, especially at induction where many are disorientated and intoxicated.

The situation is confused further by short term funding for voluntary agencies which makes promotion of a coherent service to prisoners more challenging.

Many prisons have pre-release courses which include issues such as CV building and work on issues around disclosure to employers. Some programmes follow the prisoner through the gate and provide mentoring in the community, in some cases by using peer mentors who may have NVQ Level 3.

One of the barriers to providing a progressive programme for prisoners has been the lack of effective systems enabling records of achievement to be transferred between prisons. For example, it has not been unusual for prisoners to have their basic skills assessed several times, either due to being unable to complete them accurately due to intoxication or because records have not followed them to another prison.

**Figure 1: Multi Agency Delivery in Prisons**



The East of England Test Bed programme has addressed the barriers to greater coherence through a number of projects including;

- Better assessment of personal, 'employability' skills or characteristics
- An 'employability compact', where prisoners and offenders in the community sign up to a periodic assessment of their employability skills – such as

reliability and team working – in return for rewards which may include an opportunity to have a work trial or enhanced privileges

- Developing 'virtual campus' software the provides a platform for multi agency support towards employment in prison and 'through the gate'
- Cross prison IAG
- Seeing is Believing' employer visits to prisons.

### Cross prison information, advice and guidance

Against this background, the development of cross prison IAG has entailed support for organisational development and change management in prisons. The Matrix Standard framework was used in all cases and two of the original prisons have now been accredited against the Standard. These were; HMP Bedford (a local prison) and HMP Eastwood Park (a women's prison in Gloucestershire).

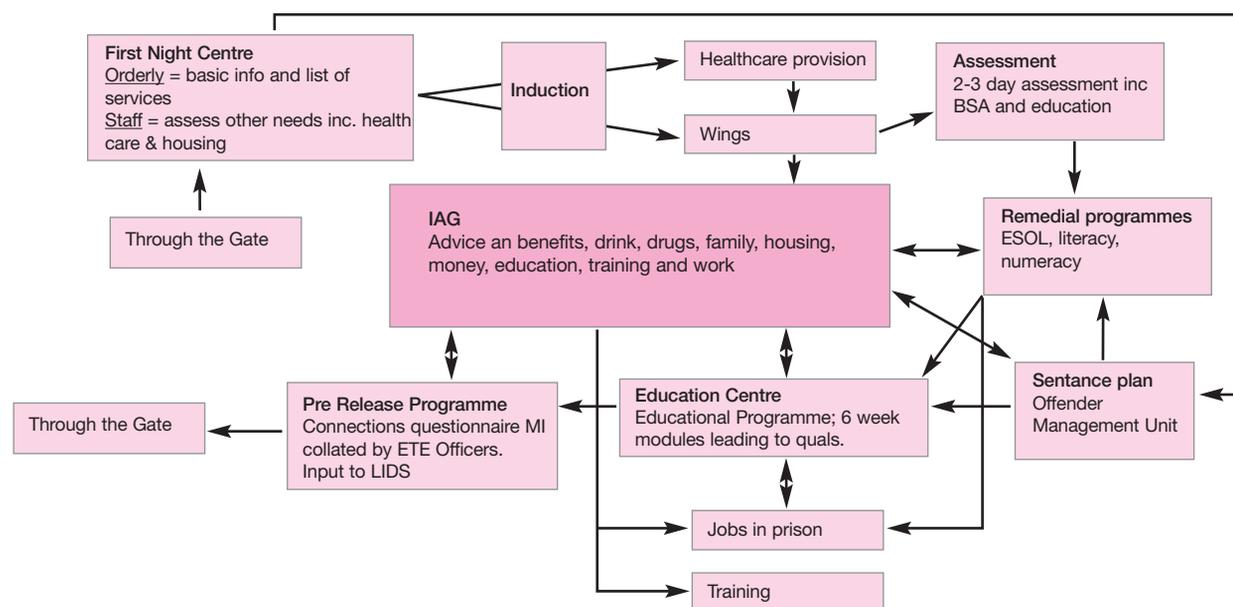
All OLASS external agencies have to have Matrix accreditation. The cross prison IAG model recognises that IAG is a fundamentally important process in every prison, covering the seven (or nine) pathways and delivered by just about every member of prison or agency staff in direct contact with prisoners. Therefore the process entails working with people who have never heard of the Matrix Standard and to ensure that OLASS providers are clear about how cross prison IAG connects with their own accreditation.

We defined the characteristics of a cross prison IAG service as:

- Being coherent from the prisoner's perspective
- Having a mission statement – integral to prison policy statements and agreed by the prison's senior management team
- It should facilitate the prisoner's journey
- Human and other resources should be sufficient in competence and quantity to deliver the service – including prison staff
- Partnership and information sharing protocols should underpin the collaborative approach
- Management information should cover the key indicators required by the service manager(s)
- Referral, marketing and feedback should be coherent
- Collaborative processes for CPD and CQI should exist.

<sup>2</sup> Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps; Home Office, DfES and DWP, December 2006.

Figure 2: Typical Offender Prison Journey



As noted earlier, prisons vary in how they process prisoners through their regime. However there are common elements in the employment and training pathway such as:

- Induction – including IAG and assessment
- Labour allocation
- IAG review (s)
- Resettlement – including specific programmes on preparing for work outside the gate, offender behaviour programmes, employability compacts and referral to external agencies.

The process can, typically, look similar to that shown in Figure 2

### Supporting change

Helping prisons bring together disparate processes to demonstrate that a unified IAG service is challenging. Critical to success is to have the support of the senior management team, a clear mission for IAG across the prison and a nominated project manager with the necessary authority to drive the process. In the pilot phase, having external consultancy support with a knowledge of the Matrix Standard helped to reassure prison staff that the process was based on clear principles and underpins the guidance and support element of the Common Inspection Framework. It therefore helped existing self assessment processes rather than being an additional process.

Given the significantly diverse characteristics of different prisons – even within categories – support had to be bespoke. Nevertheless, typically, pre-assessment processes included:

- Working with the HoLS to develop a mission statement and/or a statement of service for IAG across the prison
- Identifying the areas of provision to be submitted for assessment. Many prisons opt to focus on one area first ; typically learning and skills, leaving resettlement until later
- Preparing a broad assessment of areas requiring attention and supporting groups tasked with undertaking the work. These groups usually include partners such as OLASS providers, relevant prison departments (such as workshops and gymnasias and relevant voluntary agencies) and voluntary agencies
- Delivering IAG awareness training for prison staff
- Encouraging the development of a coherent marketing strategy. In several cases, this work included using offenders' skills. In one case, the outcome was a series of materials using graphic symbols – an important approach in the context of lower than average literacy levels and high incidences of poor spoken English by black and minority ethnic groups
- Ensuring that communication across prison departments and agencies is at an appropriately high level. The range of information and rates of change are so high that this is an issue for even the best organised establishments. The Matrix Standard framework provides a comprehensive checklist for continuous quality improvement in this area in particular; indeed the prison Quality Improvement Group is frequently centrally involved in the process.

### Outcomes and good practice

It is not surprising that some prisons are finding that using the Matrix framework is a basis for their self assessment is helping them to fine tune what is already good practice in

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terms of communication, collaborative working protocols and feedback strategies such as co-ordinated feedback strategies including focus groups.

Others are finding it difficult to work swiftly on addressing identified issues. In some cases this due to other significant projects such as new buildings and/or a rapid increase in the prison population or a change in the prisoner profile.

Several prisons are considering introducing a single point of delivery for IAG delivery. Others are addressing the problem of developing a progressive programme by prisoners – supported by IAG - transferring information on achievements and other information between prisons by developing unified systems for prisoners that will record all relevant achievement and regime information in one place. This is a critical issue for IAG. In many cases, IAG workers do not have ready access to information on prisoners' previous activities. IAG workers frequently have to ring other prisons to obtain the information.

To support the process Tribal, the IAG provider, is introducing learner folders for prisoners' certificates and assessments. Some prisons are introducing their own record of achievement systems – incorporating the Tribal process. Recording achievement will continue to be a significant matter for most prisoners as they will not have unique learner numbers (ULNs) before being sentenced. Where ULNs have been issued, learning providers will have access to the relevant information whilst offenders are in custody.

Whilst the benefits of working with the Matrix Standard for self assessment against the Common Inspection Framework are well understood, it is also apparent that implementing a significant proportion of the recommendations of reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP) can be materially supported by using the Matrix Standard. In future, HMCIP and OfSTED will conduct joint inspections.

It is expected that the Government will announce a national employability compact programme in 2009. Experience in the East of England Test Bed project shows that cross-prison IAG is an essential prerequisite to an effective compact process. OLASS3 will see a change in the arrangements for assessment in relation to IAG.

Close communication with ENTO, the holder of the Matrix Standard, has been maintained, including holding a joint workshop for Matrix advisers and assessors on cross prison IAG issues. It was noted that cross prison IAG has significant similarities to IAG to, for example, further education colleges.

## Moving forward

One other prison, HMP The Verne - a prison located in Portland, Dorset and with a very high proportion of foreign nationals, has been reassessed as a cross 'learning and skills' service. The prison will consider a wider accreditation at their next re-assessment. Nine others in both regions are now actively working towards Matrix accreditation, illustrating the benefits that prisons now see in this approach. The importance of IAG to a successful prison regime is now increasingly understood and that, in turn, reflects on the importance attached to IAG for learning and work by prison managers.

## Conclusion

In one sense, ensuring that prisons provide a coherent IAG service to prisoners is little different to the challenges in secondary schools or further education colleges. All are complex organisations where IAG is provided by specialists and other people who are in daily contact with their clients. The latter may not initially recognise their important role as part of the overall service, but individuals will frequently seek support from people they know, and trust, the most.

Whilst the contexts are significantly different in many ways, there may be lessons to be drawn from the cross-prison IAG project which could be helpful in other arenas. It is significant that an increasing number of prisons are adopting the cross prison IAG approach, underpinned by the matrix Framework.

A critically important issue in reducing re-offending is providing continuity of support through the gate into the community. Two community based projects, in Gloucester and Peterborough are seeking to improve through the gate support, led by the Probation Service in both cases. The latter group has committed to exploring how the Matrix Standard can support the development of the project.

What is missing is a significant body of research evidence to underpin the development of policy and practice in delivering IAG in prisons.

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# Careers guidance for adult work-based learners: why traditional support services are not sufficient

Sue Wilkinson

The changing profile of higher education students and the importance of career services in enhancing student employability led to a review of higher education careers services carried out by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE, 2001). This review highlighted the under use of career services by non-traditional students and the importance of developing models of information advice and guidance that meet the needs of these students.

This paper will report on a recent study carried out in response to this apparent deficit in the provision of careers support for foundation degree students at a UK higher education institution and its associated partner colleges. Data from an electronic survey will be presented and issues regarding the lack of careers support available to these students will be highlighted. Suggestions of how to rectify this deficit will be discussed.

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore approaches to career guidance for non-traditional students. The research aimed to identify where gaps existed in careers guidance provision for foundation degree students and to ascertain why such gaps existed and how this deficit may be addressed.

This paper details a study conducted by Foundation Direct CETL at the University of Portsmouth into the career development support needs of Foundation degree students. Foundation degrees (FD) are work-based qualifications and statistics show that, with 34,000 entrants in 2006-07 and over 40,000 in 2007-08 (HEFCE, 2008), the numbers of students enrolling on these courses continues to grow. It is expected that total student numbers will rise to 97,000 by the year 2010 as the current students work through their programmes (HEFCE, 2008). The popularity of Foundation degrees may also increase, following a report in 2006 stating that the government aims to have 40% of adults educated to level 4 and above and 90% educated to at least level 2 by 2020. It claims that the way to do this will be through co-operation between employers, individuals and institutions to respond to employer needs and individual demand. Seventy percent of the population who will be of working age in 2020 have already left compulsory education, therefore focusing on adult skills and education is crucial.

The foundation degree is one route for adults to gain professional recognition and develop skills related to their chosen career.

The profile of a foundation degree student is typically different from that of a student following a traditional undergraduate bachelor programme. HEFCE (2008) reported that 92% of full-time students were on courses that are two years or shorter and 70% of part-time students were on courses of three years or shorter, suggesting that Foundation degrees are generally shorter than more traditional degrees. This report also highlights the fact that foundation degree courses attract more mature students, many studying by distance learning, and it estimates that only between 11% and 33% of entrants have A levels. Purcell *et al.* (2007) also point out that applicants to foundation degree courses or HNDs/DipHEs were generally older (supporting the HEFCE, 2008, report), more likely to enrol for study at a new (post-1992) university, more likely to be in employment, and less likely to rate themselves highly on numeracy and literary skills than applicants to 3- or 4-year bachelors degree programmes. Many FD students have already chosen a career, and their involvement with an FD programme may be to validate or quantify their experience in their field. It thus follows that the type of career development guidance and support these students require will be different to that needed by the traditional students following a traditional course.

Purcell *et al.* (2007) also examine other apparent differences between the average profile of a traditional student versus a foundation degree student. They point out that there are differences in gender distribution with more females applying for traditional courses than FD courses (reflecting the types of subjects available at FD level), and that whilst 43% of applicants to traditional courses have at least one parent who has studied at higher education level, only 35% of FD applicants have a parent who has studied in higher education.

A review of higher education career services was commissioned in 2001 by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This review reflected an understanding of the importance of career services in student employability, taking into account the diversity of the higher education student profile and the role of higher education in lifelong learning (DfEE, 2001). This review highlighted the importance of adapting and developing models of career development advice and guidance that would be appropriate to non-traditional as well as traditional students. The review also revealed that non-

traditional students do not use career services, an issue that this study also aimed to address. The review also identified that increasing numbers of students are studying part-time and/or on distance learning courses in order to fit in with work or other commitments.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) reiterated the need for higher education institutions to adapt their provision of careers services to appeal to different types of student (HEFCE, 2001). The needs of non-traditional students differ widely to those of traditional students; they are more likely to have identified a career direction and be more familiar with the working world, but may still need support and advice when it comes to career progression and development.

With the exception of some research by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU, 2003) into how careers services can increase the employability of graduates from non-traditional backgrounds which suggested a balance is necessary between the services offered to all students and special services offered to mature students, there has been little academic research into careers services for non-traditional students since 2001.

There have been no studies examining the career support needs of work-based learning and/or foundation degree students. Thus, at present, there is no careers development support in place to guide this student population during and after their studies. It was this gap in the research that has inspired the current study.

## Method

### Participants

All participants were students currently enrolled on a foundation degree at Portsmouth University and partner colleges. 151 students participated in this research, 82.9% of whom were female and 17.1% were male. Most of the participants (40.8%) were in the age range of 36-45, 27% in the age range 26-35, 20.4% in the range 46-55, 9.2% in the range of 18-25, and 2.6% were over 55. Most of the participants were studying at Portsmouth University (73%). The rest were students at South Downs College (8.6%), online/distance learning courses (7.2%), Alton College (5.9%), St Vincent's College (3.9%), and Isle of Wight College (2%). Most of the participants were in Year 1 (44.7%) or Year 2 (40.1%) of their course, but some were in Year 3 (9.9%) and in Year 4 (5.3%). Most of the students who responded to the electronic survey were doing a foundation degree in Business and Management or Early Years Care and Education (both 24.3%). Others were studying Education Administration (14.5%), Learning Support (10.5%), Paramedic Science (9.9%), Medicines Management (7.9%), Government (4.6%), Medical Imaging (0.7%), and Working with Young People (0.7%).

### Design and Materials

This was an electronic survey created online using SurveyMonkey.com and sent to c.450 students on foundation degrees. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey covered questions such as what level of careers support they already received, whether they used this support, how important they rated career development, and why they were doing the FD.

### Procedure

An email was sent to students which contained a link to the electronic survey. The purpose of the research was briefly explained to the students and they were invited to take part in the research by clicking on the web link. They were advised that the survey would only take a short time to complete, and that their data would be kept anonymously (their name and email address being separated from their responses before analysis). In order to encourage participation, students were advised that if they completed the survey they would be entered into a draw to win an iPod and that this would take place after the survey had closed and they would be notified by email if they were successful. The survey was active for about 6 weeks before it was closed.

### Results and discussion

This section will analyse the results of the survey under the following themes: current careers support, and attitudes to career development.

The majority of foundation degree students study part time (96.7%), with only a few studying full time (3.3%). This is due to the fact that all of the students in this research work at the same time as studying; 81.6% work full time and 18.4% part time. Taking this into account, it is no surprise that these students have different career support needs to students following a more traditional route on a full-time undergraduate degree. Only 16.6% of the students in this study started their foundation degree with the intention of changing their careers, the remainder having embarked on the degree to progress further in their current field. Despite this desire of participants to progress in their professions, almost half (49.5%) of these students were not aware of the options that would be available to them on completion of their foundation degree. This clearly indicates a lack of careers support which needs to be addressed in order for these students to make informed choices about which direction they take after their degree. In the same vein, over three-quarters of participants were intending to carry on after their foundation degree to top it up to an honours degree, but 64.4% of these students stated that they did not know what steps they would need to take to arrange this, or where they should go to find out.

## Careers guidance for adult work-based learners: why traditional support services are not sufficient

HEFCE (2008) reported that 55% of 2004-05 foundation degree students registered to do an honours degree top-up, and of these, 24% did not graduate (this could be due to not finishing in time, or failed to qualify). Of those who did graduate, 40% achieved a first or 2:1, and 28% achieved a 2:2. To compare this with figures for students overall, 37% of foundation degree students who topped-up to an honours degree achieved a first or 2:1 when finishing in 2006-07 compared to 55% of students overall in 06-07.

Research into the clarity of career choices and qualifications required by students when embarking on a degree course has been conducted by the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (as cited in Purcell *et al*, 2007). This research reveals that on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being 'I have a clear idea about the occupation I hope to enter and the qualifications required for it' and 7 being 'I have no idea what I will do when I complete my course'), just under 60% of foundation degree students rated themselves as 1 or 2 and only approximately 5% rated themselves as 6 or 7. Furthermore, this study reveals that when asked what the main reasons were for choosing a particular course, foundation degree students stated interest in the course subject, and employment and career related reasons (Purcell *et al*, 2007). Older students, across all degree/course groups were more likely to give the reason as needing to gain the qualification in order to enter a profession. This highlights the fact that foundation degree students are aware of their career development needs and further illustrates the need to assist these students in maximising their potential.

In terms of current careers support available for participants of the current study, 30.7% stated that they receive some support from their employer, and only 14.5% reported that they receive support from their university or college. However, the University of Portsmouth has a careers service which is open to all students on all courses. The fact that most of the FD students surveyed stated they did not receive support from their university suggests a serious lack of awareness of existing support services. Those who were aware of the university careers service claimed that they did not use this service because they felt it was not geared towards helping adult work-based learners and gave advice more appropriate to a 21-year-old undergraduate bachelors programme student. Those who claimed they had support from their employer mentioned that they had time off work to study, in-house training, advice and support from their line manager, and financial support. However, the kind of support participants mentioned specifically was financial support for the course, flexible working hours and time off to study etc., with very little specific careers guidance/development support. For those who did state that they received support (in whatever format), 43.9% find this support helpful, 22% find it very helpful, 29.3% are neutral, and 4.9% do not find it helpful.

Over half of the students in the survey rate career development as very important, 42.8% rate it as important, 4.8% were neutral, and only 0.7% rate it as not important. Some of the reasons given by participants as to why they think career development is important were: motivation, job satisfaction, to feel valued and more confident, to feel empowered, to provide opportunities, to achieve aims, for personal development, to continually progress, to increase skills base, to earn more money, to give direction and goals, to feel satisfied, to be challenged, to be aware of future developments in field, for self improvement, to remain interested in job, and to secure a future for self and family. One participant wrote that their personal and professional development was important to them because 'Stillstand ist Rueckschritt' (to stand still is to go backwards). This clearly indicates an awareness of the importance of career development amongst foundation degree students.

A relatively large proportion of students, 55.2%, believed that careers support would definitely increase their confidence in applying for new jobs, and 33.8% believed that it may increase their confidence. Almost half of the students stated that they thought they would benefit from specific tailored careers advice, 44.8% said they may benefit, and only 7.6% believed that they would not benefit from careers advice.

Most respondents stated that their main obstacle in doing their FD was time management. All students work whilst studying, and many also have family commitments. It was noted that juggling studying, family and work left little time left for career development learning, which suggests the need to focus on guidance and support that is easy to access and can be engaged with at any time. E-guidance is one way of ensuring that all students are able to have access to the support. If time is a significant component in students' reluctance to engage with career learning activities, then it may be that transforming career development learning into a more interactive process with tangible benefits may be the way forward.

### Conclusion

This study has shown that although foundation degree students rate career development as very important, very few know what their options are on completing their foundation degree, and very few are aware of how they would arrange to continue onto a top up year for an honours degree, despite a large percentage of participants wishing to pursue this. This lack of provision of careers support and guidance seems crucial considering the nature and purpose of these degrees as work based learning qualifications. These students comprise a population who are very aware of the importance of linking their studies to their professional development, yet this is a student group for whom careers advice and support is significantly lacking. In addition, most of the students stated that they would benefit from tailored advice if this were available to them.

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This research highlights the need for careers support services and educational institutions to join forces in developing services to support non-traditional students. In response to this apparent need for careers support tailored for mature work-based learners, the Foundation Direct CETL at Portsmouth University is currently designing and developing a careers support website that is focused on supporting this student group. Research is being carried out into what areas to target in terms of careers support and what facilities and information such a website should contain. It is hoped that this online resource for career guidance and support for work-based learners will begin to close the gaps in careers guidance provision for non traditional students.

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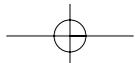
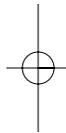
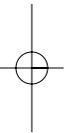
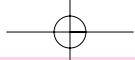
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