



Exploring the career conceptions of generation-z students at Coventry University

A project report for HECSU

Background

I have been working in Higher Education Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) since 1998. For the majority of that period my specialism was careers information. Since around 2012 I have been involved in online teaching, instructional design, professional enquiry (informal research), coaching, and continuing professional development. I have a particular interest in the effects of technological and social acceleration on the future of work and careers, along with generational difference in career development. In 2016 Lucy Wilson-Whitford, Head of Coventry Careers, proposed that I explore a line of professional enquiry associated with the so-called 'generation snowflake phenomenon'. This initial idea evolved into a project proposal to look at how our most recent student cohorts, 'Generation-Z', conceive the notion of a career. Later that year I came across the research fund of the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU), of which the stated aim is 'to support the research interests of careers staff in HECSU members' institutions'. I drafted a proposal which was accepted in late August 2017.

As a careers professional new to formal research I have found the experience to be challenging, developmental and rewarding.

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1 Executive Summary

This document reports on a HECSU funded, qualitative, exploratory project to examine the career conceptions of generation-z (born 1996 onwards) students at Coventry University. The project, which was based around three one-hour focus groups (n=23), ran from August 2017 to October 2018.

The main themes that were predicted (deductive) or identified (inductive) and which influenced, or appeared to be elements of, participants' career conceptions were: *family; cultural background; YouTube; TV/Film; social knowledge, cognitive process or passive perception; technological and social acceleration; attitudes to continuing professional development; remuneration and graduate debt*; and fulfilment and autonomy.

The analysis and discussion is considered from several theoretical perspectives: protean career, boundaryless career, RIASEC differentiation indicator, acquisition of career knowledge, technological and social acceleration, careers as inheritances, (inter-)generational commentaries, and the organisational career/job tenure.

There was little evidence of concerns around unemployment or uncertainty in relation to career progression, financial security or job tenure. On the contrary, there were indications of a positive outlook, with fulfilment and autonomy ranking higher than salary or job security. Participants were invited to provide their own definitions of career. These descriptions tended to emphasise *following your heart* over stasis and security.

Parental influence was on the whole supportive of the agency of participants in their career decision making. Some participants were raised in more directive cultural environments, with some of those concerned indicating more relaxed parental attitudes than that which older siblings had experienced. This is not to say that one approach is intrinsically better than the other and indeed (although this was not evident from the focus groups) some generation-z may appreciate more directive support.

There was some concern raised with regard to the effects of social acceleration, although this was qualified with acknowledgement of a tension between thrill and pressure. There was awareness of the effect of technological acceleration on the future of work, although there was an assumption that *creative destruction* (here, defunct industries spawning new ones) would continue as in earlier times. There was no mention of property ownership, or any other form of home-making as a goal in relation to career stasis or otherwise. There was some awareness of the evolution of the organisational career and this mirrored the views of some modern career theorists. There was little indication that historical ideas of career were prominent factors in participants' contemporary notions of career (i.e. ideas about jobs and work filtering down from preceding generations and shaping career conceptions, contrary to the realities of the contemporary career landscape).

Ideas about professional development and career management were suggestive of a collaborative relationship between employer and employee, with some indication of individuals valuing a self-directed approach to professional development. There was evidence that participants considered career and organisational boundaries to be more permeable today than in earlier times. Some views suggested that older generations are inclined to make certain assumptions regarding the facility of career progression and entrepreneurial endeavour and apply those values inappropriately to the career pursuits of generation-z.

Conversations regarding YouTube arose spontaneously. There was no mention of YouTube as a source of labour market information or career-management/professional-development

learning. YouTube was valued as a source of information in specific YouTube content categories and as a source of entertainment. YouTubing was possibly considered an aspirational lifestyle/career. There was an indication that the interactive comments element of YouTube was valued in that it provided a sense of community. There was some indication that film/TV was a source of career influence through the representation of occupational roles. The experience of TV entrepreneurs was, to a certain extent, seen as being out of touch with the contemporary career environment with regard to generation-z.

In many instances participants would have imbibed career information from common social knowledge or passive perception; constructing their own career knowledge via a cognitive process. Whereas, in pre-internet times careers professionals would have been the effective gatekeepers of career information, today information associated with career development is ubiquitous but unmoderated. In terms of the present project there was no indication of formal engagement with CEIAG services or with formal acquisition of labour market information. This, then, is a matter of concern for HE CEIAG.

The scope and nature of the study was limited in a number of ways. The explorative nature of the project means that it was not intended to produce any generalizable themes or conclusions. Whilst efforts were made to ensure consistency of coding, thematic analysis is inevitably a subjective endeavour. The literature review was not exhaustive, rather it was intended to provide a basis for discussion and to be a means of establishing and interpreting themes.

The study has produced some key points of interest about the career conceptions of the particular sample. Together they suggest that the sample's career conceptions are broadly in line with more modern theoretical trends in career development (e.g. adaptability, flexibility, autonomy, self-actualisation) and somewhat distanced from the more traditional values of career security and stasis. This may be related to a popular observation that generation-z (for a range of reasons) tend to permanently leave the family home and make major life transitions later than did earlier generations. In addition there was a sense of positivity and absence of concern for fluctuations in the graduate labour market.

None of the conclusions drawn from this study can be assumed to be generalised characteristics of generation-z. A quantitative study would be required to reach any empirically based conclusions. The present report aside, there have thus far been two outputs from the project: an article submitted to the Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC) and a workshop delivered at the 2018 annual conference of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). A third output is intended, which will recount my experience of conducting the project as a first time practitioner-researcher.

2 About the Project Proposal

The following is adapted from the HECSU project proposal submitted in August 2018.

Outline of the project idea.

Contemporary career theories (e.g. Arthur, Inkson & Pringle 1999, Pryor & Bright 2011, Savickas 2005) advance that the Industrial-State career landscape of most of the previous century is characterised by relative stasis and by well-defined organisational, vocational, and progression boundaries, along with an established and consistent employer-employee psychological contract. Rousseau & Schalk (2000) define the psychological contracts in employment as 'the belief systems of individual workers and employers regarding their mutual obligations' (p.1). The

realities of the contemporary career landscape in the New Economy, on the other hand, can be characterised by change, uncertainty and adaptability, along with permeable boundaries and potential for opportunity or precarity. In the era of late modernity, the future of work, jobs and career is increasingly called into question, driven significantly - it is asserted here - by the impact of technological and social acceleration. According to Bloch (1989), individuals form and adjust their ideas about work via exposure to a range of environmental and social influences, and through which they construct their own unique mental schema representing, what is for them, the nature of career (referred to in the present study as the individual's 'career conception'). The constituent notions forming each individual's "career schema" are (Bloch 1989) derived from both informal (family, peers, media. etc.) and formal (career professionals, teachers, etc.) sources.

Using this conceptual framework, the present project will adopt an exploratory methodology (Stebbins 2001) to examine the currency and nature of the career conceptions of "generation-z", year 2 undergraduates at Coventry University and to identify emergent themes.

Questions I am seeking to answer:

- (1) What are the influences that contribute to the formation of their notions of career?
- (2) How are their notions about the nature of career reflective of:
 - a) a traditional view of career, grounded in the industrial-state career landscape?
 - b) contemporary ideas about career in the *New Economy*?
 - c) uncertainly related to technological and social acceleration?

Note: Some of the content in the remainder of this report is adapted from an article to be published in the NICEC Journal: 'The world is your oyster...' (Mowforth, in press). In some instances chunks of text are duplicated verbatim, where to re-write would have diminished meaning.

3 About Generation-Z

Amalgamating the birth years of twentieth century generational cohorts as proposed by Stillman & Stillman (2017) and Steele Flippin (2017), the groups can be delineated roughly along these lines: Traditionalists (born before 1946), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation-X (born between 1965 and 1980), 'Millennials' or Generation-Y (born between 1981 and 1995) and Generation-Z (born after 1995).

Importantly, generation-z (hereafter gen-z) is said to be distinct from generation-y (hereafter gen-y) in several ways. Perdue University (n.d.) summarises some of those differences. For example, the attitudes of the millennial generation may be characterised as 'special' in contrast with that of gen-z being 'stressed'; gen-y as social media pioneers are seen as 'willing to share', whereas gen-z are inclined to 'cultivate their public presence'; gen-y have a preference for leaning in groups in contrast to gen-z's inclination to pre-learn independently prior to engaging in group learning; and finally the work philosophy of gen-y reflects 'exploration' and 'work-life balance', whereas gen-z are seen as being 'focussed' and 'career oriented'.

In regard to millennials apparently considering themselves to be 'special', that cohort have been controversially characterised in the media as a *Snowflake Generation* who lack robustness and have been raised in a parenting style that rewards engagement equally with achievement. It may be that some commentators apply this characterisation also to gen-z, or that they do not make a distinction between the two cohorts.

Stillman & Stillman (2017) contrast an independent tendency of gen-z with the more collaborative working style of millennials. Steele Flippin (2017) observes that gen-z have always known a world with instantaneously accessible information, have been raised in an environment where social media is ubiquitous and have been parented by generation-X and millennials who are more inclined than their own baby boomer parents to allow their offspring the freedom to learn from direct experience. The authors observe that gen-z are: 'focussed on preparing for careers at a young age' (p.7). Seemiller and Grace (2016) found their American gen-z university students to be: loyal, compassionate, thoughtful, open-minded, responsible and determined. In a UK context, Combi (2015) observes that gen-z are 'growing up in a world shadowed with economic uncertainty, shrinking job prospects, widening social inequality and political apathy'.

4 The industrial state, the new economy and the job for life

Arthur, Inkson & Pringle (1999) discuss the evolution of the career landscape with reference to two loosely defined periods: the *Industrial State* era, which for my purposes I will consider to encompass the latter half of the twentieth century; and the New Economy, representing, for me, the Millennium to the present day.

Many modern career theorists, e.g. Arthur & Rousseau (1996), Hall (2004), Lo Presti (2009), Savickas (2011), concur in that the career landscape of the Industrial State era was characterised by relative stasis and by well-defined organisational, vocational, and progression boundaries; along with an established and consistent employer-employee psychological contract. Rousseau & Schalk (2000) define psychological contracts in employment as 'the belief systems of individual workers and employers regarding their mutual obligations' (p.1.) The New Economy on the other hand has shaped an employment environment which is said to be characterised by change, uncertainty and adaptability, along with permeable boundaries and potential for opportunity (e.g. Hall, 2004) or precarity (e.g. Standing 2016).

When it comes to examining changes to job tenure, however, the picture is somewhat mixed. Yates (2014, p.11) for example, states that: 'The received wisdom is that there has been a dramatic shift in job security within the last generation, but in fact, neither job turnover within the labour market - nor our attitudes to it - have changed in the last 50 years'. Yates goes on to cite Burgess & Rees (1996) who do not find evidence during the period 1975-1992 to support a demise of the so-called *job for life*. My interest here lies somewhat more in Yates' 'received wisdom' than an empirically supported reality since I wanted to gauge what participants understood by the term and whether their perceptions were shaped through interaction with older generations. Nevertheless, it is helpful to briefly examine the two competing schools of thought in order to place the subsequent sections within a broader conceptual framework.

Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng (2014) examine four generational cohorts - Matures (Traditionalists), Baby Boomers, Generation-X and Millennials - examining comparative [inter-]organisational mobility, job mobility and upward movement. They find that: 'despite significant environmental shifts, the diversity of career patterns has not undergone a

significant shift from generation to generation', suggesting that on aggregate there has been no change to the duration of job tenure.

The quantitative studies above tend to focus on the notion of job tenure as a measure of inter-organisational mobility across the gamut generational cohorts. I speculate that the term *a job for life* had a generationally specific meaning during the Industrial State era: effectively a paternalistically orientated psychological contract communicating assurance of job security and ongoing welfare support – sometimes underpinned by trade union representation; with loyal employees, stereotypically looking forward to the proverbial gold watch on retirement. Indeed, Clarke (2013) and (Lo Presti (2009) for instance point out a distinction between a relational psychological contract experienced by older generations in comparison with a more short term transactional contract in the modern career landscape. To what degree jobs were actually *for life* is contestable. My interest here, by contrast, is in notions that may be inter-generationally transmitted to gen-z and how this current generation may form their own interpretations of the term in a contemporary context.

A concept closely associated with the *job for life* and enduring tenure is the *organisational career*. While acknowledging the importance of new models of career, Clarke (2013) questions why organisational careers have (or had) been eliminated from the academic dissuasion and cites Lazarova & Taylor (2008), in suggesting a bandwagon effect that has, or had, led many career theorists to assume the demise of the organisational career. In her qualitative study of 20 Australian managers, Clarke (2013) proposes a model of: 'The "new organisational career" that combines characteristics of the traditional organization career, the boundaryless career and the protean career'. Effectively, Clarke is suggesting that the organisational career is not dead but has transformed from a unidirectional, paternalistic power relationship to one of mutually beneficial motivators for retention. It would be interesting to consider the extent to which this bandwagon effect may also have shaped the perceptions of career guidance professionals. It was my assumption in designing the focus group questions that popular perceptions of the *job for life* are aligned to its demise.

Finally, I suggest that the notion of *a job for life* may be, or have been, different depending on the type the organisational culture prevalent for particular groups of workers: white collar versus blue collar and non-graduate versus graduate.

5 Methodology

An application for ethical approval to a Coventry University ethics committee was instigated in August 2018 and approval was granted in October 2017.

Second year Coventry University undergraduate students were invited to join the study and were selected to form a representative sample (n=23) in terms of gender, nationality and faculty. Each participant was assigned to one of three one-hour focus groups (of which analysable content was around 40 minutes each). The sessions were video recorded and later transcribed by me using the listen and repeat (speech-to-text software) method (Park & Zeanah 2005, Matheson 2007). Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire.

Thematic analysis was informed by Braun & Clarke (2006) and began with a set of deductively established *theoretical* themes originating from the focus group stimulus questions: 'a *theoretical* [italics mine] thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). As the analysis progressed certain additional themes were inductively identified: 'An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990)'

(Brown & Clarke, 2006, p.83). Given the aim of exploring subjective career conceptions formed within various social contexts, the approach was broadly constructionist. Codes were revised and modified throughout the process and attention was given to consistency of coding. Codes were reviewed and refined recursively. In some instances analysis was semantic - whereby what was spoken could be taken at face value; in other cases latent meaning required interpretation - which inevitably was subjective. Whilst occurrences of the various coded categories were counted to provide some sense of scale, a higher frequency does not necessarily imply significance.

A sample (n=37) of gen-z studies listed within Google scholar indicated that most of the research is conducted in a US context (US=18, UK=2, eight other countries = 11, not known = 6). The assumption in the present study is that, given the similarity of educational systems, internet/social media access and generational cohorts, the literature will maintain a significant degree of relevance between the UK and the US, and possibly with other technologically advanced countries.

It is important to note that the various generations are, of course, not homogenous entities. Thus, the attributes discussed here are generalisations relating to the cohorts and that there will be broad variability within these groups.

6 Themes

In planning the study, the research questions gave rise to a number of deductive themes around which the stimulus questions were drafted. In analysing the dataset an inductive theme that I label *following your heart* became evident, which in turn gave rise to the question: are gen-z driven primarily by a desire for fulfilment, personal agency and self-actualisation, or rather one of achieving stability and stasis? Related to this question is another concerning motivational drivers to adopt a flexible career mindset: are participants' concerns primarily associated with circumstantial disruption (e.g. structural/technological, frictional and cyclical unemployment) or rather, a more protean (Hall 1976, 2004) outlook favouring personal values as a motivator of career transitions? There was a demonstration of this duality in a participant commenting: 'Sometimes I think they [careerists] find themselves in the situations and sometimes they just want to change'. The question was informed by discussion around technological acceleration in two of the focus groups. Participants' career conceptions were further explored from the viewpoint of career theory.

6.1 Family

Family members arose as an influencer on 27 occupations. 31 relatives were mentioned in total and out of these 26 pertained to parents either individually or as couples. Out of the 26 occurrences of parental influence, seven indicated explicit encouragement of carer decision autonomy: i.e. effectively to follow your heart/do what you want.

- they always told me to do whatever I like, no matter what everybody else says
- [participant quoting parent] "You go for it. I missed my opportunity but you go for it"
- He [father] tells me that I should do what I love and be happy with it and just live my life
- She [mother] just said you know, "Do whatever makes you happy, do what you want"
- They [parents] gave me all the tools and told me, "just figure it out yourself"
- [context of parental influence quoting parent/s] "Up to you. Do what you want and that makes you happy"
- The most thing is their parents need to be open about it for their son to be free to do whatever he like

On two occasions participants indicated that they had asserted their own wishes over that of their parents. There was one expression of parents deterring their offspring from particular jobs.

6.2 Cultural background

From the demographical questionnaire, there were 3 participants of African descent, 1 of Arab, 1 of East Asian, 5 of European and 7 of British descent. In addition two participants declared that they were of mixed cultural background.

In terms of cultural heritage, contributions from European and British participants appeared to be broadly similar, generally demonstrating '*modern western liberal values*'. Cultural heritages of some of the SE Asian, East Asian and African participants appeared sometimes to be more directive in terms of giving career advice, although there were indications that those aspects of parental influence were, in some instances, dissipating somewhat.

- I think it's influenced by it, definitely. Like being an Indian like obviously 'Doctor or nothing' sort of mentality [laughter]. But obviously, I can definitely see [...] the change from generation to generation [...] They're becoming a bit more open-minded I guess.
- [African background] So, yeah I think from a very young age it was kind of pushed onto me that I wanted to be a doctor and I was like, "yeah, actually I do think I want to be a doctor". So... I don't want to be a doctor!.
- Like in Asia it's like... people will like respect their parents' opinion. So, let's say if their parents say, "Oh, I want you to like study this course", some of them they would follow their parents
- My parents were born and raised in [African country] [...] And with that it's like... with them they never had the opportunities of a very good education. So they know... well they do know because they work a lot, they really try hard to give me the best life. So it's like everything they do is for me to progress and to have the best life I can, possible. So when they enforce the education and the [professional occupation] and all that, it's for a reason.

6.3 YouTube

In groups two and three, conversations about YouTube emerged spontaneously without any prompting from me. There was no mention of YouTube as a source of labour market information or career-management/professional-development learning. Neither was there any mention of YouTube as a study resource. There were 23 codings of YouTube broadcasting as a source of income or business activity and 14 of career potential as a broadcaster or as access to other career opportunities. The conversation was balanced with participants addressing one another's apparent misconceptions: '[If you wanted to start a YouTube channel] you'd get like one or two viewers and others are getting tens of thousands'. There was an indication that they valued the sense of interaction and community of the medium. There was a sense that professional *YouTubing* was considered an aspirational lifestyle/career.

6.4 TV/Film

Half of participants' contributions pertaining to TV as an influence were during a conversation about celebrity entrepreneurs. Some questioned the currency of a certain entrepreneur's youthful experience, '[He] will say like, "well I didn't get any [GCSEs]" and it's just like, you were from a completely different time!'. Some were inspired by TV characters 'whatever was like the TV show the main protagonist was, I was oh I want to do that'. There was some indication that film/TV as was a source of career influence through representation of occupational roles.

- It kind of changed day-to-day for me, I was never quite set on one thing so whatever was like the TV show the main protagonist was I was oh I want to do that

6.5 Social knowledge, passive perception and cognitive process

There were many contributions indicating influence derived from social knowledge, passive perception and through cognitive process. This category was further coded as: *partially substantiated* (2), common knowledge (16), specialist knowledge (13), perceptions (26), reasoning (13), viewpoint/opinion (6). These aspects of influence proved challenging to code since they required a degree of interpretation as to the source of the assertions. Some examples in this category are:

- I feel like now everyone is trying to just keep doing better and better and better. Whereas, back then [industrial state era] it was kind of like, “we’re stable, we’re fine” kind of thing.
- there’s so many big companies and small companies being swallowed up by these big companies now
- the way I’m seeing it is, it’s like definitely not gonna be a job for life but more shorter terms and it’s sort of more independent like there’s a lot more people being their own bosses because of this sort of freelance type of thing
- The fact that you can apply [to universities] and you can go and you don’t have to pay it back till you’re over a certain amount. It is expected that you take those opportunities

(See Appendix 1 for the complete list of quotes in this theme.)

In some contributions pertaining to the media and fashion industries, the participants concerned demonstrated insight into the specificities of job hunting in those sectors: e.g. the importance of networking, of accumulating a track record, and of constructing a portfolio.

There was no indication of formal engagement with CEIAG services or with formal acquisition of labour market information. The job market appeared to be perceived as buoyant. There were no concerns raised as to graduate unemployment, no mention of precarious employment situations, e.g. Standing (2011), or of the gig economy.

6.6 Technological and social acceleration

The term technological acceleration is commonly aligned an observation that technology is evolving exponentially (e.g. Ford, 2015). Frequently, discussion concerning techno-acceleration revolves around the effects of automation on those work processes traditionally carried out by humans (see Mowforth, 2017a). A related and overlapping concept is Rosa’s (2010, 2013) social acceleration whereby certain social processes, driven by various factors, are increasingly speeding up, giving rise to a sense - in varying degrees - of alienation, exhilaration and stress. Intentionally, technological and social acceleration were not explicitly introduced as part of the question schedule.

Participant P1.1, a mechanical engineering student, raised the issue of self-driving trucks in the US and truck driver protests. As he developed this line of thought he was effectively describing the phenomenon of creative destruction (here, redundant processes spawning new ones). Following some discussion with another participant P1.1 stated that, ‘You’re going to need to be able to transition from one thing to the next’. In analysing the transcript, these contributions were evocative of Holland’s RIASEC differentiation indicator (Spokeman, 1996). The conversation between these participants considered a perceived need to be able to transition from one occupational area to another due to technological disruption (see Mowforth 2017b). P1.1 highlighted the problem of high differentiation in those circumstances: ‘once you’ve done a fashion degree you’re not going to go and start

practising law' and later stated: 'If you're a taxi driver or lorry driver you'd have to transition from driving to maybe into a service industry'. P1.4 (also a mechanical engineering student) responded: 'Sorry but you can't just transition to being creative when you're not creative'. P1.1 summarised by saying: 'more diverse skills in the workforce is going to be needed in the future. You're going to need to be able to transition from one thing to the next'. P1.4 appeared to suggest that that automation will benefit employers to the detriment of workers but concluded that ultimately it will serve to increase education and be a: 'good step for humanity'. The conversation was effectively considering individuals' degree of natural differentiation. That is to say, how in those circumstances low differentiation (interest and ability distributed across the RIASEC types) could be beneficial, whereas high differentiation in a declining occupational sector may be disadvantageous). Further exploration of this theme may benefit from consideration from a specialist/generalist perspective.

Mainly during group three, I sensed an awareness of social acceleration stemming from their own experience. The broad themes identified from those conversations were: critical importance of subject choice decisions (during secondary education), GCSEs (increasing workload and pressure), competition, concurrent necessity and desire to be ambitious, credentialism, academic inflation, and increasing stress/pressure.

- there is some sort of pleasure from being ambitious because they kind of have to be because [...] being ambitious comes with a lot of stress
- Like you have to decide what you want to be when you're 30 when you're 14. And if you don't that's it, you're screwed

6.7 Attitudes to continuing professional development

The vast majority of responses to questions about who should be most responsible for the CPD of people within employing organisations indicated that they believed it should be the combined responsibility of the employer and the employee. Two responses in this context indicated they believed that both parties will benefit from CPD. There were indications that some participants were aware of issues associated with CPD and return on investment for employers. There were 11 instances of participants indicating insight into the value of a self-directed approach to professional development and 13 where participants indicated that they understood the value of CPD.

- With them like investing in you but like you can leave... I think that the point is that if they are investing in you, you won't want to
- You can search on Google or whatever and then, there will be advertisements for people to teach you how to do something
- You obviously want to open as many doors of you can like to gain all the knowledge you can get

Clarke (2013) provides support for the idea that CPD today is a joint responsibility. The specific context that Clarke considers is 'career planning and career management activities'.

...there is evidence of a shift towards joint responsibility between employer and employee. Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) describe this as an integrated approach that combines more traditional career planning and career management activities. Employers continue to offer career opportunities but employees are expected to create their own career paths. Employers make their expectations explicit and employees then look for ways to meet those expectations.

Clarke (2013, pp. 692-693)

This is in contrast to the paternalistic organisational career management norms encountered more frequently during the industrial state era.

6.8 Remuneration and graduate debt

Four comments were directly related to debt. Two of these considered that the return on investment from HE, along with favourable loan conditions, outweighed debt on graduation: 'you pay like in tiny, tiny amounts that you wouldn't even feel [nods of affirmation from others] but the benefit is huge' and: 'you don't have to pay it back till you're over a certain amount'. One participant recounted a friend's parents' antipathy to student debt. Another saw level of student debt as equating to a commitment to a particular career direction.

Participants' comments regarding money as a career motivator was mixed, with no clear indication that it was significant factor. Subsistence income aside, *enjoyment*, *fulfilment*, *career decision autonomy*, *sense of agency* and *self-actualisation* together appeared to rank higher than remuneration as a driver. There was an indication that participants perceived remuneration as having been a significant factor - related to career stasis - during the industrial state era.

9.9 Definitions of career

At various points, participants were invited, explicitly or implicitly, to provide their own definition of what a career is today. Broadly along a scale from industrial state to contemporary conceptions the following codes were applied: an eventual means to support retired parents; (promotional) ladder (x3); long-term sector (x2); specific goal (x2); defining theme; mixture of work and education; (themed) doors to knowledge acquisition; stepping stone; job choice; many jobs – possibly in diverse fields; flexible goals (x3); degree not essential (enjoyment important); for some money, for others want/love/enjoy; enjoyment 1st, money 2nd, promotion 3rd; the notion of career is evolving; is related to one's brand/lifestyle; self-actualisation once stability is achieved (previous generations satisfied with stability); aspiration (rather than stability); doing what you want/love/enjoy (x4).

To summarise, there were a few definitions that were evocative of an industrial state conception of career, although most of these, it could be argued, are also characteristics of typical modern careers. Midway, there were suggestions of choice, flexibility and personal development. At the opposite end of the spectrum were those definitions that were suggestive of career being conceived as a facilitator of personal fulfilment. I got a sense of strength of feeling in certain of these instances, which was further emphasised by some reiteration. One participant was effectively describing Maslow's hierarchy of needs (prompted by me) in expressing that self-actualisation was the ultimate goal, and that in order for this to happen a degree of career stability is required.

- Job choice [...]And maybe progression in a certain role [...] It's almost like you work your way up the ramp [...] I see it as you start off at the bottom kind of thing and you get gradually, work your way, promotion-wise [...] in most organisations there is always room for promotion, there's always opportunities
- when I think of like career I think of lifestyles. Because I feel like your career kind of becomes your lifestyle sort of thing.
- To me, a career is like a job with an end goal [...] I feel like the end goal is mobile, it can move it can change
- I'd say that's more relevant now and then perhaps the generation before us maybe their idea of career is just that bottom rung [...] I feel like now everyone is trying to just keep doing better and better and better. Whereas, back then it was kind of like, "we're stable, we're fine" kind of thing.
- Something that I'd want to wake up and go to. Instead of just, "this is my job I've, got to go".
- Yes, well, in my opinion, a career is just – for a person - is doing something that you really love and it gives you total satisfaction

(See Appendix 2 for the complete list of quotes in this theme.)

6.10 Following you heart

This theme proved problematic to label since it amalgamates a set of closely related concepts identified throughout the study: i.e. self-actualisation, personal agency, fulfilment, career decision autonomy, and independent volition. Thus, the notion of 'following your heart' is used throughout the report to encapsulate the totality of all these meanings.

The theme arose within the parental influence and the definitions sections above. Excluding occurrences in those categories, there were a further seven explicit instances of the theme elsewhere, for example:

- And then it comes to us and we are like, no, I want to be happy. I don't want to just be stuck in a job for life, I want a career, I want options and choices
- I feel like I'm a little bit more like, if you want something you should go for it
- If you enjoy it then you can make a career out of it
- The world is your oyster basically like you can, you can change even if it's just your employer

In addition to these more concise statements, there were several other implicit references throughout the three groups.

Given its occurrence in several contexts across the transcript, along with the sense of emphasis I perceived during the focus groups and while listening to the recordings, I consider this to be the most prominent inductively identified theme in the study.

7 Discussion

7.1 Protean career orientations

The concept of the protean career was proposed by Douglass Hall in the final chapter of his 1976 book entitled *Careers in Organisations*. In 2004 Hall reviewed the development of the concept over a 25 year period, defining the protean career as 'one in which the person, not the organization, is in charge, the core values are freedom and growth, and the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success) vs. objective (position, salary)' (Hall, 2004). Hall suggests that protean orientation is both trait and state and can be enhanced through the development of two metacompetencies: adaptability and self-awareness. In the present study, those contributions suggesting an element of protean orientation were evaluated under two dimensions of protean orientation as described in Briscoe & Hall (2006).

For my purposes, I equated the authors' values-driven element to seeking self-fulfilment, as analysed above. In addition to coding instances suggestive of a self-directed outlook, I counted examples of who is/should be in charge of an individual's professional development as an indication of self-direction. A few occurrences indicated it was the employer's responsibility. For most it was either a combination of employer and employee, or the individual taking ownership of their development. (Relative responsibilities for professional development was considered in section 6.7, above.) From this evidence of values and self-direction, I concluded an indication of protean-orientation within the groups.

7.2 Awareness of permeable boundaries

In their introductory chapter to *The Boundaryless Career*, Arthur & Rousseau (1996) describe boundaryless careers as ‘...the opposite of “organisational careers” – careers conceived to unfold in a single organisation’ (p.5). There are competing views as to whether modern careers can actually be considered boundary-less, in its literal sense (e.g. Baruch, 2012; Baruch & Vardi, 2016). Thus, where a prompt was required I used the term ‘permeable boundaries’ in the focus groups.

In one of the groups, there was a conversation concerning an observation that CAD and similar software are encountered in both mechanical engineering and fashion, and – effectively - that automation is a driver for boundary crossing, for instance: ‘You wouldn’t think that maybe fashion and engineering are particular linked. But [...] like you say, the barriers are sort of softening’ and: ‘a lot more people transition into more creative stuff because you can’t get a computer to like design or draw some clothes because it doesn’t quite work’. In another of the groups the conversation focussed on geographical boundary crossing. A participant suggested that once graduates are established in their career they can say to themselves: ‘Well, you know what, I’m doing business here. I can go to Japan or another country, or America and decide to start a life there’ and further commented: ‘there are less boundaries now [...] I believe you can do whatever you want in this day and age’. There was an indication that a facilitator of this boundary crossing was considered to be communications technology.

7.3 Acquisition of career knowledge

Bloch (1989) asserts that: ‘The individual, who is always seeking (at some times more actively than others) to solve the problem called career, is receptive to information which appears useful’ (p.122). Individuals map new information onto their own mental career framework. Bloch states that these sources of information can be systematic (provided formally) or unsystematic (acquired from a host of sources in the environment). The latter is the case with the information derived from social and environmental sources, as analysed above. It is interesting that none of the participants made reference to systematically delivered career information. Thambar (2018) notes the decline of career information asymmetry in the internet age. That is to say that, in earlier times careers professionals were effectively gatekeepers of career information and so could take direct measures to assure its authenticity. Today, by contrast, the balance is more symmetric in that individuals also have access to most of that information, but not necessarily in a professionally curated form. To conclude this section, I suggest that reliability and authenticity of career information is a matter of concern for CEIAG.

7.4 Values: individualistic vs superordinate

As examined above, a theme of *following your heart* was identified as a value in the career conception of the gen-z sample. What was not clear was whether those values were driven primarily by personal goals (e.g. wealth and status), goals extending beyond the self (e.g. changing the world), or some combination of the two. There were some mentions of materialistic goals and others around concern for young people in the context of exam pressure (driven by social acceleration). This then may be an issue to investigate in a quantitative study (section 9).

7.5 Comparison with the industrial state career landscape

I identified four occasions when a participant expressed career conceptions explicitly reminiscent of the industrial state career paradigm, for example: ‘it’s like if there’s a business you start at a level and then you see yourself working up to becoming a manager and then maybe you go further to CEO’ and: ‘I’ve always thought [originating from parent’s experience] you stick in your current job’. In group one, participants were asked what they

understand by the term *a job for life*. Some participants associated it with older generations. For others, the interpretation was more aligned with contemporary options and preferences. Across all three groups participants were invited to compare their perceptions of the career landscape fifty years ago with that of the modern career. There was some recognition of career stasis having been aspirational (and perhaps of life commitments having been a driver of that). There was a perception from one or two participants that people from older generations were inclined to apply their own experiential framework in communicating their expectations of gen-z: 'personally I feel like a lot of people from the older generation feel like well I did it and so can you and it's not that easy'. Some felt that job opportunities were greater in the past due to relative absence of credentialism. For most, there was a perception that widening access to HE has opened a broader range of opportunities. There was recognition that in the modern career landscape more frequent job transitions are likely:

- I feel like the concept of a career though is sort of going out the window nowadays because there's that statistic where like people our age on average will have like ten to fifteen different jobs in their life whereas people for the generation before had like five to ten sort of jobs in their life

7.6 Careers as inheritances

The above discussion on parental influences (section 6.1) and familial cultural influences (section 6.2) prompted me to consider Ker Inkson's (2007) metaphor of *Careers as Inheritances* (pp.27-51). I have considered whether, for instance: ideas about the *Job for Life* may be transmitted generationally; whether evidence of cultural influences on career choice were significant in the focus groups; and how values of *following your heart*, and especially career decision autonomy, are apparent in accounts of parent-child communication.

Inkson considers Bourdieu's constructs of fields and habitus as a mechanism for transmission of inheritance - fields being: 'social spaces in which people live their lives' (p.30) and habitus being: 'the system of internal, personal, enduring dispositions through which we perceive the world' and: 'the vehicle in which much of our inheritance of values, interests, ideas, motivations, and social connections are incorporated' (p.31).

Job for Life.

As already discussed, in the focus groups the notion of a *job for life* was interpreted in roughly equal proportions as either something like *enduring tenure underpinned by a paternalistic psychological contract* or as *a matter of personal choice in the modern career landscape*. It is difficult to say to what extent the traditional interpretation was due to inherited ideas transmitted from older generations as there are many environmental sources of career knowledge (e.g. film, TV, books, etc.). Nevertheless it is interesting to speculate that in some instances this vertical transmission of *received wisdom* may contribute to shaping the habitus and this may be a useful consideration in designing a possible quantitative study (section 9).

Cultural inheritances.

To expand on section 6.2, the most prominent cultural influence that was evident in the focus groups was a *modern western liberal* approach to parenting which values individual choice. This was in contrast to a more traditional, patriarchal and directive approach encountered in non-western cultures and prevalent in western culture in earlier times. For some gen-z, a more directive cultural background may in fact be valued in that it can serve to provide a particularly stable and supportive grounding for career transitions, reducing uncertainty and stress. For others, the freedom to make their own decisions, and to learn from their own mistakes, may be more appreciated. It is interesting that the examples of more liberal cultural influences frequently indicated a concurrent element of support for decision-making and that more directive backgrounds appeared in most instances to encompass an element of flexibility. Whatever the characteristics of the cultural background it is likely that cultural

inheritance inevitably persists to some degree within the habitus of the individual - i.e. that despite our own volition we are influenced by the cultural environment in which we developed. As Inkson (p.31) states, 'we internalise external constraints and opportunities and build our habitus over time from new experiences'. In the context of the focus groups, to what extent inherited cultural values are actually shaping the career conceptions of gen-z is uncertain.

Career decision autonomy and following your heart as an inheritance.

As already examined, there was a significant indication of a value associated with self-actualisation, fulfilment and autonomy in the groups. Whilst, inevitably, a range of societal influences will be implicated, it was clear that familial influence was a significant factor in supporting participants' own career choices. I speculate that this form of parental influence is active in shaping the habitus of participants.

Through applying Inksons' inheritance metaphor to the analysis in this way, I conclude that viewing the research question from that angle may be helpful in further considering the career conceptions of gen-z and in designing a quantitative study (section 9).

8 Conclusion

The study has produced some key points of interest about the career conceptions of this particular sample. (1) Their outlook was generally positive, with an emphasis on career decision autonomy and self-fulfilment. (2) There was, virtually, no indication that their career concerns were related to potential lack of opportunity (i.e. no reference to the various forms of unemployment). (3) Technological acceleration was perceived as generally positive; creative destruction being inevitable but at the same time a generator of employment opportunity in the long term. There was no-mention of the gig economy. Social acceleration was perceived as being both stressful and attractive and there was concern for its increasing effect on school pupils. (4) Although not expressed as such, there was some indication that the sample regarded the organisational career to still exist, although (it is assumed here) in a new form. (5) There is parental support for career decision autonomy and self-fulfilment, with cultural background being a mediating element. (6) Environmental sources of information (e.g. the media) are factors in the construction of career conceptions, although their ubiquitous nature gives rise to concerns regarding quality and disinformation. (7) Although not analysed in the study, there was an absence of concern related home-making (perhaps in earlier times this would have been a motivator to seek career stasis and security).

Together, most of these observations suggest that the career conceptions of the sample are broadly in line with more modern theoretical trends in career development (e.g. adaptability, flexibility, self-actualisation) and somewhat distanced from the more traditional values of career security and stasis. This may be related to a popular observation that gen-z (for a range of reasons) tend on the whole to permanently leave the family home and make major life transitions later than did earlier generations. In addition there was a sense of positivity and absence of concern for fluctuations in the graduate labour market.

9 A possible quantitative study

From the inception of the present project it was intended that its results would serve as a basis for the design of a large-scale, quantitative study at some point in the future. It is not certain however that resources will be available to undertake such a project within the foreseeable future. It may be then that others choose to do so and possibly in those circumstances the present report may serve to inform it in some way.

On the other hand, it may turn out that it is, in reality, feasible for Coventry University Careers to take the enquiry further and in these circumstances I look forward to experience. On that assumption I would need to educate myself in quantitative methods, as I have prepared for the current qualitative project. I would on that in that instance, however, be intending to seek some kind of mentoring or informal supervision, especially as I do not have any grounding in statistical analysis. Certainly from the perspective of my own professional development (section 14) I am keen to experience involvement in such a study.

10 Limitations

The intention of the study was to provide some insight into the career conceptions of small representative sample of a particular university student cohort. The explorative nature of the project meant that it was not intended to produce any generalizable themes or conclusions.

A qualitative methodology was chosen for a number of reasons and in particular, here, to minimise the effect of researcher preconceptions in the design of the study and to provide a moderated but expansive forum for participants to express their thoughts about the nature of the contemporary career. The focus groups were structured around a list of pre-defined stimulus questions but at the same time there was flexibility for me to judge when and in what circumstances to permit the conversations to deviate from strict adherence to the list. Whilst efforts were made to ensure consistency of coding, thematic analysis is inevitably a subjective endeavour and as such my own intra-rater reliability (coding consistency) will be a limitation. Section 9 aside, outputs from the study are intended to stimulate discussion and section 11 lists some possible considerations for CEIAG practice.

Given the small scale of the research the literature consulted is only a fraction of what is in the public/academic domain and so cannot be considered a comprehensive review.

To reiterate what has already been highlighted earlier in the report, this small-scale qualitative project cannot produce any generalizable results. Indeed, it only subjectively considers themes that were pre-planned or seemed apparent within the particular sample. Whilst in some instances evidence supporting those themes was minimal, emphasis of speakers and affirmations or negations were taken into account.

Appendices 1 and 2 provide full lists of quotes from the two themes with the most frequent contributions. For other themes only selected quotes are included.

11 Considerations for CEIAG practice

Whilst insight gained from the project is not based on quantitative evidence, here are few possible considerations (adapted from my AGCAS conference presentation, below) which may help in shaping and futureproofing our practice:

- Information symmetry/asymmetry
- RIASEC differentiation in considering clients potential for adaptability
- Do we/should we help clients to explore their career-related values?
- What are their attitudes concerning professional development
 - And how/why might that mindset be attractive to modern employers? How might job applicants exploit that?
- Are clients' career conceptions anchored in an industrial state mindset?
- If so does it matter?

- And why?
- What, if any, are clients concerns regarding techno- and social acceleration?
 - And how might we best address these?
- How might we best communicate with gen-z (being mindful of diversity of individuals and of our assumptions)
- Might those career theories aligned to the contemporary employment landscape be particularly helpful in understanding gen-z?

12 AGCAS Annual conference

In September 2018, between the end of the analysis and prior to submission of the NICEC article (section 13), I presented preliminary findings in the form of a discussion workshop at the annual conference of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). On the day it became apparent that the workshop was significantly oversubscribed and consequently it was shifted to a larger venue. The fact that delegates had reference only to the workshop description in order to make their selection, suggests that there is considerable interest amongst career professionals in exploring the career-related characteristics of this generation. In October 2018 the workshop PowerPoint presentation was submitted to AGCAS to be uploaded to their website.

13 NICEC Article

Towards the beginning of the analysis phase I was notified of a call for papers for the November 2018 edition of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) journal. I submitted an abstract, which was accepted in March 2018. Ordinarily this report would have been written and the project completed prior to considering any further outputs. Given the opportunity and timing, however, I decided to write the article before starting work on the present report. By co-incidence, submission of the first draft of this report and final draft of NICEC article turned out to be on the same day.

The NICEC article, Mowforth (in press) may be considered a potted version of the main points of this report. It is my understanding that, once the journal has been published and made available to NICEC members and other journal subscribers, I will receive a copy of the published version that I will be free to disseminate myself.

14 Professional development

This was my first attempt at a formal, funded research project. I have found it to be a steep learning curve but at the same time a rewarding and worthwhile professional development activity. I will briefly address a few of the issues I encountered here since I propose to give a fuller account of my experience as a first-time practitioner-researcher in a future article.

Project proposal

The structure of the proposal pro-forma was useful in helping me to refine the research questions, to quickly acquire some basic methodological knowledge, to perform a preliminary literature review, and to draft a project management schedule.

Ethics application

As with the proposal, the application pro-forma helped me to get to grips with drafting the focus group schedule (e.g. defining the stimulus questions, taking measures to ensure

confidentiality and data protection, and ensuring support after the session should participants needs it).

Recruiting participants

Ensuring that the sample was as far as possible representative of the year cohort was more complex and time consuming than I had envisaged. With hindsight it would have been more efficient to have considered gender balance ahead of other characteristics.

Setting up, recording and facilitating the focus groups

I spent a considerable amount of time effectively doing a risk assessment of the session to ensure I had anticipated any possible snags. I experimented with different room configurations and got help from my colleagues in the CU Careers team to carry out a dummy run. These were worthwhile precautions, which I believe paid off in the smooth running of the sessions.

I had two laptops with external webcams ensuring coverage of the semi-circle of participants along with three audio recording devices. Video recording was essential for identifying speakers during transcription.

The facilitation experience pretty much mirrored my expectations of it. In regard to one inductive theme (YouTube), I would not on reflection have allowed that particular conversation to have continued for quite so long.

Transcription

Despite using the speak-repeat, speech-to-text method, I found the process of transcription to be much more time-consuming than I had anticipated. However, the activity did result in my becoming very familiar with the data-set prior to coding and analysis and so was useful in that regard.

Coding and Analysis

Coding proved challenging in several ways. Firstly, towards the end of the process I started to doubt the consistency of my categorisation (intra-rater reliability). Secondly, I had spent considerable time trying to get to grips with coding in NVivo computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, ultimately (having discovered published tips from experienced qualitative researchers) to reject that method and to revert to sortable tables with in a Word document. Making this change of tack caused delay to the project. Thirdly, some categories covered a range of closely related content but I experienced some difficulty in identifying a single label that would adequately encapsulate all aspects of the category.

Analysis involved evaluation of the themes from the perspective of various theories and schools of thought associated with the research questions.

Reporting and Outputs

The present report covers the principal and most pertinent themes arising from analysis of the focus group transcriptions. There was a considerable amount of additional material, which proved to be beyond the scope of the research questions per se, but which were nevertheless interesting to consider in terms of generation-z. For example, I had spent quite some time considering influences in regard to developmental career theory but ultimately judged it to be beyond the limits of the present report. Other outputs were the AGCAS conference (section 12) and the NICEC article (section 13). There is potential for additional outputs stemming from this project. For instance, the proposed quantitative project (section 9); enquiry into the evolution from generally asymmetric to symmetric career information in the internet age (Thambar, 2018); and specialist versus generalist career orientations, in regard to the effects of technological acceleration on the world of work (end of section 6.6).

Professional development learning

In addition to the points raised above, with hindsight, I would have benefited from access to a mentor or some sort of *support network for novice career practitioner-researchers* (there is, in fact, limited support of this nature available at Coventry University, although not to my knowledge related to the career development sector). I have developed greatly from the experience, especially in terms of experiential learning through my many mistakes! I feel more confident in discussing research-related issues with academic colleagues and feel in a better position to discuss my topic with fellow practitioners.

15 Acknowledgements and final note

I would like to thank Lucy Wilson-Whitford, Head of CU Careers, for her kind support and encouragement, along with the team at Coventry University Careers for their assistance in helping me to set up and administer the focus groups. The Coventry University IT Services department kindly loaned me some recording equipment, which was much appreciated. I'm grateful to HECSU for the funding and the opportunity to undertake the project. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience, encouragement and support.

Being new to formal research, the experience has been both challenging and developmental. Above all, now it's complete, I can say that it has also been rewarding and worthwhile. I would encourage other career practitioners new to research to try their hand. I would encourage them to give thought to scale, time management and to explore sources of support and advice, from the outset.

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Appendix 1 – Full list of quotes from the *social knowledge, cognitive process or passive perception theme*

- I feel like now everyone is trying to just keep doing better and better and better. Whereas, back then [industrial state era] it was kind of like, “we’re stable, we’re fine” kind of thing.
- there’s so many big companies and small companies being swallowed up by these big companies now
- the way I’m seeing it is, it’s like definitely not gonna be a job for life but more shorter terms and it’s sort of more independent like there’s a lot more people being their own bosses because of this sort of freelance type of thing
- It’s very different now [compared to the 1950s] because right now there’s a lot more people than the was back then [...] and there’s also more jobs because there’s more things that you can get involved in like ICT and all that
- [It’s] harder [to get a job nowadays] than like fifty years ago because obviously you have like a degree and certain knowledge. I completely agree with that, however on the other hand, I think that transferable skills are much more important now.
- I feel like there’s actually less factory jobs as well - like I may be wrong but - my perception is that because there’s more technology now, there’s actually less of a need for like labour. Because labour jobs are getting replaced by technology. So it’s like something that fifty years ago a human had to do it can now be replaced by a machine.
- I think after university is when you actually put your... whatever you’ve learned into practice, that’s when the practical learning starts
- And I think that like no matter what you do you gonna be learning, no matter what you do. Like, just general life skills. Even if you don’t have a job, like you still learn from experiences all the time
- we live in an age where its far more easy to make connections I think it’s easier to gain them
- Their [workers in the industrial state era] idea of maybe a career was, “I just need to be able to get money, feed my family and that’s my career, fine”. I don’t... Maybe that’s just me being a bit stereotypical I don’t know. But I think back then it wasn’t so much of... They didn’t really... I don’t want to say they didn’t aspire as much. But I feel like now everyone is trying to just keep doing better and better and better. Whereas, back then it was kind of like, “we’re stable, we’re fine” kind of thing.
- I would like to say that university students are still in the minority in terms of young people who go for further education, however they like one or two decades they won’t be the minority, I’m pretty sure it’s going to be the majority
- The fact that you can apply [to universities] and you can go and you don’t have to pay it back till you’re over a certain amount. It is expected that you take those opportunities

Appendix 2 – Full list of example quotes from the *definitions theme*

- I’d say like a career is a particular like job sector, that you’d go into - that you expect to go for the majority of your working life [...] I guess once you’ve started a degree in something you’re kind of committed to it for at least three years. And then once you got a degree you’ve got that much debt you may as well go forth with that particular career
- the career definition could be changing as time changes as society changes
- It’s a theme. It’s a defining theme

- I feel actually like [it's] a set of doors for me. [...]. You obviously want to open as many doors of you can like to gain all the knowledge you can get, as you go older kinda thing [...]There is a theme between like each stuff kinda thing.
- it's is not just a job. It's something that you have a plan for the future [...] I mean it's like if there's a business you start at a level and then you see yourself working up to becoming a manager and then maybe you go further to CEO or something
- ... and when you go to a job you have the opportunity to experience different things and therefore we might change our perception of what we want to do.
- you don't have to, you don't have to go to university in order to graduate and then having a career or something
- I don't have like hundred percent perception of what career is but I think it's a mixture of work and education.
- For me I feel it's like a stepping stone for me. Like I would like to have my business one day so with my career I will like gain knowledge.
- Job choice [...]And maybe progression in a certain role [...] It's almost like you work your way up the ramp [...] I see it as you start off at the bottom kind of thing and you get gradually, work your way, promotion-wise [...] in most organisations there is always room for promotion, there's always opportunities
- I think there's definitely like a hierarchy. Because like enjoyment, money and promotion...
- I see a career as like the long term goal. Like not something that you know that you're only going to be doing for like the next like five years or whatever
- when I think of like career I think of lifestyles. Because I feel like your career kind of becomes your lifestyle sort of thing.
- I would say that there is still the same [as it was in the past], there is still the same sort of stance but is definitely evolving and its definitely changing.
- I think meeting parents' expectation like when you're getting high salary you need to pay for them when they retire [some affirmations from the group]
- I see a career as like the long term goal. Like not something that you know that you're only going to be doing for like the next like five years or whatever
- To me, a career is like a job with an end goal [...] I feel like the end goal is mobile, it can move it can change
- we want, as you said, self-actualisation. We want to be appreciated more. So goal is not, money is not no longer that much of driving factor as it was 10 years, or essentially now, as it is.
- I'd say that's more relevant now and then perhaps the generation before us maybe their idea of career is just that bottom rung [...] I feel like now everyone is trying to just keep doing better and better and better. Whereas, back then it was kind of like, "we're stable, we're fine" kind of thing.
- Something that I'd want to wake up and go to. Instead of just, "this is my job I've, got to go".
- Yes, well, in my opinion, a career is just – for a person - is doing something that you really love and it gives you total satisfaction
- I mean, if someone wants to change their field, if they will do something else, it's completely up to them because in the end it's doing what you love and what you enjoy.
- It's something that I enjoy doing.
- doing something that you really love and it gives you total satisfaction
- Whereas [presumably in comparison to people earning very high salaries] some people are more than happy to sit on 27 grand a year if they're enjoying what they're doing.