The relational nature of undergraduates’ career management

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Presentation objectives:

• Study background
• Research objectives
• Proposed model
• Research design
• Study results
• Research contributions
• Study limitations
Study background(1):

- Relational approach to career management

- Careers and career management are ‘relationally and contextually embedded’ (see Popadiuk & Arthur, 2013:4)


- Focus on multiple concurrent relationships (eg Chandler & Kram, 2010; Higgins, 2000, Malloy, 2005).

- Antecedents and outcomes of development networks.
Study background (2):


• Foundations of networks & Career success are laid early in the UG transition process.

• Importance of career management in HE (Bridgstock, 2009; HEFCE, 2010; Jamerson et al, 2012).

• Conceptualisation of career management & career success for UGs is essential.
Study background (3):

‘Developmental network literature includes many areas in need of clarification and further exploration’ (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2011).

Little attention given to the importance DN on career outcomes

Focus on existing network structures in work environments

Very little DN research addressing concerns or behaviours of undergraduates
Research aim & objectives:

Aim: To test a model on the relational nature of undergraduates’ career management.

Objectives:
1) To conceptualise career success in a way that is meaningful for undergraduates.
2) To conceptualise how undergraduates can engage in a relational approach to managing their career before entry into the labour market.
3) To develop a model of the antecedents of undergraduates’ early career success and carry out a preliminary examination of these relationships.
Figure 3.1: Conceptual model on the relational nature of undergraduates’ career management (T1)

- **Socio-demographic background variables**
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Domicile
  - Ethnicity
  - Socio-economic status

- **Protean career orientation**

- **Engagement in extra-curricular activities**
  - within & outside university

- **Developmental network size**
  - Formal at university
  - Informal at university
  - Formal outside university
  - Informal outside university

- **Developmental network relationship strength**
  - Frequency of communication
  - Emotional Closeness
  - Longevity

- **Developmental network density**

- **Subjective career success**
  - Perceived employability
  - Clarity of professional identity
Some study hypotheses for T1:

**H1** Undergraduates’ socio-demographic background including H1 (a) gender, H1 (b) age, H1 (c) domicile, H1 (d) ethnicity, H1 (e) socio-economic status will have a significant effect on their subjective career success in relation to perceived employability and clarity of professional identity.

**H2** Undergraduates’ protean career orientation will be positively associated with their subjective career success in terms of perceived employability (H2a) and clarity of professional identity (H2b).

**H3** Undergraduates’ engagement in extracurricular activities within and outside the university will be positively associated with their subjective career success in terms of perceived employability (H3a) and clarity of professional identity (H3b).

**H4** Undergraduates DN size (in relation to the number of formal and informal developers within and outside the university) will be positively associated with their subjective career success in terms of perceived employability (H4a) and clarity of professional identity (H4b).
Some study hypotheses for T2:

H8 Undergraduates’ protean career orientation at T1 will be positively associated with their subjective career success at T2 in terms of perceived employability (H8a) and clarity of professional identity (H8b).

H9 Undergraduates’ engagement in extracurricular activities at T1 within and outside the university will be positively associated with their subjective career success at T2 in terms of perceived employability (H9a) and clarity of professional identity (H9b).

H10 Undergraduates’ DN size at T1 (in relation to the number of formal and informal developers) within and outside the university will be positively associated with their subjective career success at T2 in terms of perceived employability (H10a) and clarity of professional identity (H10b).

H11 Undergraduates’ DN density at T1 will be negatively associated with their subjective career success at T2 in terms of perceived employability (H11a) and clarity of professional identity (H11b).
Research design

Large scale **online survey** sent **to all 2nd year undergraduates** at Londonmet and Reading Universities.

**Questionnaire**

- Name generator (e.g., Burt, 1984; 1997; Higgins 2004; Higgins & Thomas, 2007)
- Approx. 10-15 mins to complete.

**Time one**

- Invited via email with a unique identifier
- Incentives - prize draws

**Time two (one year later)**

- Online questionnaire sent to all undergraduates who took part in T1 (now in and their 3rd year of their studies).
- 10 minutes to complete
- Prize draw
- Personal analysis with some preliminary results.
An example of the diagram and graph for the student’s personal analysis

**Your development network structure**

- Atul: Friend
- Jane: Friend at University
- SarajB: Fellow Student
- You
- DR SmithG: Lecturer
- JamesF: Manager/supervisor from current work
- Megan: Co-worker from previous work

**The career and personal benefits you receive from your developers**

5 point Likert scale:
1 = ‘Never’
2 = ‘To a limited extent’
3 = ‘To some extent’
4 = ‘To a great extent’
5 = ‘To a maximum extent possible’

![Bar graph](image)
Study results
Students by population and sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>T1 Sample</th>
<th>T2 Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Londonmet</td>
<td>4429 (59%)</td>
<td>311 (39%)</td>
<td>58 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3031 (41%)</td>
<td>482 (61%)</td>
<td>164 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7460</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal component analysis results for perceived employability at T1 & T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1 Labour Market Awareness</th>
<th>T1 Career Self-Confidence</th>
<th>T2 Labour Market Awareness</th>
<th>T2 Career Self-Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My degree choice rank (s) highly in terms of social status</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the external labour market</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My degree is seen as leading to a specific career that is generally perceived as highly desirable</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is generally a strong demand for graduates at the present time</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can easily find out about opportunities in my chosen field</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are looking for</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am generally confident of success in job interviews and selection events</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel I could easily get a job that is in line with my education and experience</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Employers specifically target this University in order to recruit individuals from my subject area (s)</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Varimax rotation was used in the principal component analysis and loadings greater than .60 are reported. The two rotated factors accounted for 56% of the total variance in T1 and 53% of the total variance in T2. Factor means are in bold and statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = 'Not at all', 5 = 'Maximum extent'). Time 1 (N= 793), Time 2 (N = 212).
Characteristics of UGs in relation to the study’s dependent variables

**Labour market awareness**
- International
- BME
- High PCO
- More formal developers
- Emotionally closer to developers
- Fewer formal developers
- Communicated frequently with developers

**Career self-confidence**
- Male
- High PCO
- More formal developers
- Communicated frequently with developers
- Fewer formal developers

**Clarity of professional identity**
- International
- High PCO
- More formal developers
- Emotionally closer to developers
- Fewer formal developers
- Fewer formal developers
Characteristics of UGs with higher numbers of formal and informal developers

**FORMAL-INTERNAL**
*(ie university lecturers, personal tutors, career advisors)*
- Female students
- Young students

**INFORMAL-INTERNAL**
*(ie peers on the course, university friends, student union, clubs and society peers)*
- International students

**FORMAL-EXTERNAL**
*(ie managers/supervisors & co-workers from current and/or previous workplace)*
- Mature students

**INFORMAL-EXTERNAL**
*(ie family members/partners, community members)*
- Young students
- International students
- Higher SES students
Summary of significant cross-sectional results

Personal factors

H1
- Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)
- Domicile (0 = EU, 1 = Non-EU)
- Ethnicity (0 = White, 1 = Black Minority Ethnic)

H2
- Protean career orientation

H3
- Contextual factors
  - ECA within the university

H4
- Formal developers within & outside university

H5
- Frequency of communication with developers
- Emotional Closeness with developers

Subjective career success

Labour market awareness

Career self-confidence

Clarity of professional identity
Summary of significant longitudinal results

T1

Personal factors

H7
Socio-economic status (0 = Mgt, 1 = Non-Mgt)

H8
Protean career orientation

Contextual factors

H11
Frequency of communication with developers
Emotional Closeness with developers

T2

Career self-confidence
Clarity of professional identity

+ + +
+ + +
Summary of longitudinal (post-hoc) results

**Personal Factors in T1**
- Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)

**Contextual Factors in T1**
- No of formal-internal developers
- No of formal-external developers
- Career support received from DN
- Psychosocial support received from DN
- Labour market awareness
- Career self-confidence
- Clarity of professional identity

- Change in the number of formal-external developers
- Change in DN communication frequency
- Change in DN emotional closeness
- Change in DN longevity
- Change in DN density
- Change in career support received from DN
Theoretical contributions

1) Insights into personal and contextual indicators of subjective career success for early-career individuals.

2) Examine role DN characteristics play in building repertoire of UGs’ possible selves

3) Examined the disposition of early-career individuals that bring UGs’ developmental relationships into being.

4) Extends the work of Ibarra’s model of possible selves by providing a better understanding of UGs’ personal and professional transformation process.

– Eg how UGs may fit between their provisional selves and the labour market during the process of transition from university to work.
Conceptual model showing how UGs’ develop their ‘provisional selves’
Substantive implications for policy-makers

• **Engaging with the disengage** – employability is ideologically framed and focus on producing ‘employable’ graduates – may neglect socially disadvantaged (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell, Elias, Davies, 2005; Wilton 2011).

• Employability initiatives likely to centred around the ‘active’ or ‘exploring’ provisionals who often engage with formal developers to achieve their career aspirations.

• **Disengaged provisionals** may have:
  – high levels of anxiety and worry about applying for internship
  – avoid writing application form
  – avoid getting support from formal developers.

• Have a more **targeted approach for students who are disengaged in university life** and towards enhancing their employability.
Five step developmental process:

1. Knowing oneself and identifying possible selves
2. Enlisting potential developers
3. Knowing the career context
4. Elaborating future provisionals
5. Taking action
Table 8.4: Independent sample t-test for the five socio-demographic groups and labour market awareness for the entire undergraduate sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>1.021</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>1.021</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>-.493</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domicile</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>.977</td>
<td>-4.25</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Europe</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>1.041</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>-4.28</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Minority Ethnic</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>1.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>-.807</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-managerial</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10.14: The multiple regression analysis results for the variables predicting a change in undergraduates’ formal-external developers over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPI (T1) (scale 0-7)</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>2.736</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DN size: formal-external (T1)</td>
<td>-1.132</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>-9.617</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career support received from developers (T1)</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>2.736</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable is ‘Change in the number of formal-external developers’.  \( R^2 = .746 \), Adjusted \( R^2 = .722 \). Clarity of professional identity scale ranged from 0 - 7. DN career support scale ranged from 0-5.

Regression results found 75% of the variation in the dependent variable was accounted for by a linear relationship with these three explanatory (or predictor) variables.

**Possible explanation:**
Students who started out with more formal external developers in T1 but were not receiving much in the way of career support and/or had a lower sense of CPI, tended to release some of these developers over the period.
Summary of PCA results for the dependant variable items
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>* Reverse scores</th>
<th>Professional identity</th>
<th>Labour market awareness</th>
<th>Career self-confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not yet know what my career and professional identity is (PROF 4) - RS*</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am still searching for my career and professional identity (PROF 2) – RS*</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have developed a clear career and professional identity (PROF 1)</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know who I am professionally and in my career (PROF 3)</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the external labour market (EMP 2)</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My degree is seen as leading to a specific career that is generally perceived as highly desirable (EMP3)</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My degree choice rank(s) highly in terms of social status (EMP1)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is generally a strong demand for graduates at the present time (EMP 4)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers specifically target this University in order to recruit individuals from my subject area(s) (EMP 9)</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am generally confident of success in job interviews and selection events (EMP 7)</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I could easily get a job that is in line with my education and experience (EMP 8)</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are looking for (EMP 6)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily find out about opportunities in my chosen field (EMP 5)</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalues
% of variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4.65</th>
<th>1.70</th>
<th>1.43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.80</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>