



UWS Academic Portal

Addressing gendered career decision-making

Bolger, Emma

Published: 31/03/2020

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bolger, E. (2020). *Addressing gendered career decision-making: adapting career guidance and counselling practice to the contemporary family structure*. Poster session presented at 43rd International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance Conference , Bratislava, Slovakia.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Emma Bolger

Lecturer in Career Guidance and Development, University of the West of Scotland
and
Doctoral Researcher, Heriot-Watt University

www.emmabolger.co.uk / twitter @bolger_emma /
emma.bolger@uws.ac.uk / eb8@hw.ac.uk

Research funded in partnership:



ABSTRACT

For continued applicability, career development theory requires ongoing critique, review and interpretation to meet the needs of individuals in society. Research into the career decision-making processes of young people in gender atypical occupations can be applied to guidance practice to ensure inclusivity.

In this project, these two themes combine to address why some vocational routes remain 'out of bounds' to young people for social and cultural reasons.

A study of young people's career decision-making was undertaken as part of a doctoral project examining how gendered career decision-making affects entry routes to the contemporary labour market.

Using the Scottish Modern Apprenticeship programme as a data source, the research considers both the decision maker and the individuals that influence people's career decisions, with a specific focus on the modern family structure.

The study relates to equality and inclusion agendas in vocational training, in further and higher education and in employment and to the economic impact of skills (under-)utilisation.

Introduction and context

While the labour market and the workforce are constantly changing, persistent labour market access issues present ongoing challenges, albeit in new contexts. Research into modernised apprenticeship provision across the UK and in Scotland over the past 20 years has focused on the presentation, and economic and social impact of persistent occupational segregation (e.g. Campbell and Gillespie, 2017; Campbell et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2009; Fong and Phelps, 2008; Walker and Zhu, 2007; Campbell, McKay and Thomson, 2006) with less focus on the career decision-making processes of individuals. Global pressure to address occupation segregation in vocational education and training (VET) is constant, but despite ongoing efforts the problem remains prevalent.

The relationship between family, career decision-making and the implications for gendered career choice are underexplored (e.g. Ginerva, Nota and Ferrari 2015; Lawson, Crouter and McHale, 2015; Grinberg 2015; Palladino Schultheiss 2002; Leong 2001). Recent research continues to suggest that mothers are the most cited source of career guidance in the family unit (Indecon, 2019) yet the changing nature of families and home life affects young people's career decision-making. Do 'non-traditional' family structures and other close influences have the potential to reduce gender bias in career decision-making? Is this linked to sibling gender frequency or main-parenting? In the contemporary family unit, do young people look elsewhere within their 'community' for their influencers?

Unique position of the research

The study investigates individuals whose career decision-making is gender atypical, the learning from which has implications for contemporary best practice. It incorporates critique of gender tolerances in career development theory and explores the potential for new, inclusive theoretical positions. Examining whether there is any correlation between family structure, sibship and gender atypical career decision-making may explain career behaviour that both conforms and reacts against gender norms. The contemporary family unit, in its many forms, is used as a focus.

The research adopts a unique position in the theory-policy landscape, as career development theory has not previously been utilised in researching gender atypical career decision-making in relation to mitigating occupational segregation in Modern Apprenticeships and aims to contribute to mitigation of gender bias in career choice.

Findings to date (September 2019)

The work is of a fixed mixed methods design (Figure 1.). Adopting an explanatory sequential design, phase one is quantitative data collection with the objective to develop and test hypotheses regarding career decisions of typical and gender atypical Modern Apprentices.

The project undertook the largest survey (2018) to date of modern apprentices in Scotland focusing specifically on the relationship between gender and VET. The self-administered questionnaire used an online tool due to the number of responses required, geographic location of the sample, complexity, opportunity to complete the survey using multiple types of device (e.g. smartphone, tablet, laptop) and for ease of data extraction. It was available in English and Gaelic, and 464 responses in total were received.

The quantitative data shows expected trends in relation to gender and an expected gender split in response rate, with no marked anomalies. Initial descriptive statistical findings at macro level and simple hypotheses testing of the quantitative data collected through the survey instrument have shown:

- The proportion of Modern Apprentices born in a multiple birth is significantly higher than the instance in the general population.
- The number of apprentices from lone parent households is significantly high
- The number of apprentices identifying as LGB in the 24-35 age range is significantly high
- The majority of Modern Apprentices consult their parent/guardian/ carer to obtain career guidance
- There is no statistically significant difference in the proportion of Modern Apprentices consulting male or female parents/guardians/carers, family members or other adults overall
- Modern Apprentices lack knowledge of their framework and industry

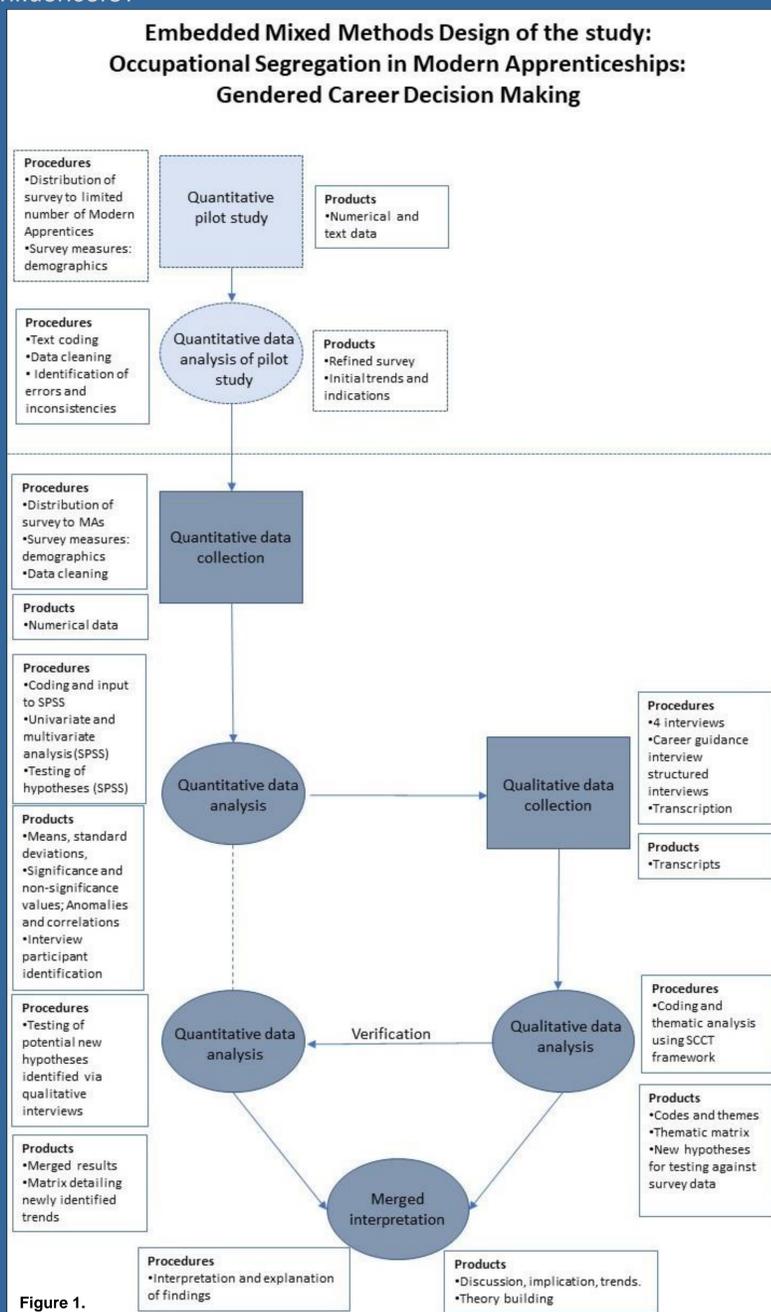


Figure 1.

Next: Advanced hypotheses testing is underway, and qualitative interview participants for **case vignettes** identified. Indicative data from this smaller sample, with sample members chosen for their demonstration of non-traditional career choices, provides context for the quantitative findings. The focus in the interviews is to capture biographical information and data on the participants' responses to past career decisions, to look for patterns in behaviour and process, consider the weighting placed upon family influences and offer a snapshot of specific aspects of career decision-making. Interviews adopt a 'practice-informed' biographical interview model and a Social Cognitive Career Theory framework is to be used for narrative analysis.

REFERENCES

Campbell, J., Gillespie, M. (2017) 'Gender analysis of spending on the Scottish Modern Apprenticeship programme' *Local Economy* 0(0) 1-13

Campbell, J., Gillespie, M., McKay, A. and Meikle, A. (2009) 'Jobs for the boys and the girls: promoting a smart successful Scotland three years on' *Scottish Affairs*, 66(4), 40-58.

Campbell, J., McKay, A. and Thomson, E., (2006) 'From Gender Blind to Gender Focused: Re-Evaluating the Scottish Modern Apprenticeship Programme', *Scottish Affairs*, 57 (1), 70-89.

Campbell, J., McKay, A., Ross, S and Thomson, E. (2013). *Briefing: How Modern is the Modern Apprenticeship in Scotland?* [online] Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University.

Fong, B. and Phelps, A. (2008) *Apprenticeship Pay: 2007 Survey of Earnings by Sector* (Department for Innovation Universities and Skills Research Report 08 05)

Ginerva, M. C., Nota, L. and Ferrari, L. (2015) *Parental Support in Adolescents' Career Development: Parents' and Children's Perceptions*, *The Career Development Quarterly*, 63, 2-15.

Grinberg, A. (2015) *The Effect of Birth Order on Occupational Choice*, *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 43, 463-476

Indecon (2019) *Review of Career Guidance* [online] available: www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/indecon-review-of-career-guidance.pdf

Lawson, K. M., Crouter, A. C. and McHale, S. M. (2015) *Links between family gender socialization experiences in childhood and gendered occupational attainment in young adulthood* *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 90, 26-35.

Leong, F. T. L., Hartung, P., Goh, D. and Gaylor, M. (2001) *Appraising Birth Order in Career Assessment: Linkages to Holland's and Super's Models* *Journal of Career Assessment*, 9 (1), 25-39.

Palladino Schultheiss, D. E., Palma, T. V., Predragovich, K. S., and Jeffrey Glasscock, J. M. (2002) *Relational Influences on Career Paths: Siblings in Context*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 49 (3), 302-310.

Walker, I. and Zhu, Y. (2007) *The Labour Market Effects of Qualifications*, Glasgow: Futureskills Scotland.