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## The Canadian Journal of Career Development/Revue canadienne de développement de carrière

Robert Shea, Founding Editor/fondateur et rédacteur en chef

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For further submission details, see inside back cover or on the website.

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Tous les articles acceptés pour publication doivent être soumis en format MS Word.

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### The Canadian Journal of Career Development Revue canadienne de développement de carrière

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## Editorial

Welcome to 2017! This year *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* is 15 years old. I am immensely proud to see how far the Journal has come, as well as how much progress has happened in the career development field over the last 15 years. Since the Journal started in 2002, we have received over 160 submissions and published over 120 articles. This anniversary brings with it changes that will allow continual growth to the Journal and, in relation, benefits to the career development field. As the editorial board reflects on the past years, we will be creating a strategic plan for the future of the Journal. In the coming months, a survey will go out on our social media sites to gather information and input from our readership and authors. I ask you to take a moment of your day to provide us with your feedback, as well as share it with anyone interested in the Journal.

Submitting your work to a journal can be very intimidating; this is especially true for students. To help alleviate this, this year we will be producing a special edition that focuses on graduate student research. We are accepting submissions for graduate student research briefs. This includes thesis work from about to graduate students but also from students who have already graduated. Research briefs are to be a maximum of 5 pages (2,500 words) inclusive of references and tables. They should contain a slimmed down intro, methods, findings, and conclusions (if applicable). Deadline for submissions is Monday, April 3, 2017. Additional details are available on our Facebook page. You can also contact associate editor Diana Boyd for any inquiries.

Now I bring your attention to the articles in this issue. In the first article titled ‘The gap year dilemma: When a purposeful gap year is the answer to career unpreparedness’ the authors discuss the benefits of taking a structured year off between high school and before starting university. They evaluated 200 first year students to see how the career choices of those who took a gap year were impacted vs students who went straight onto post-secondary.

‘Effect de l’information sur le marché du travail (IMT): Comparaison entre l’utilisation autonome et assistée de l’IMT’ by Francis Milot-Lapoint, Réginald Savard, and Sylvain Paquette assesses the impact that labour market information has on achieving career goals of individuals. The article is written in French; for those who are not bilingual an English translation will be published in the coming issue.

The last article is of international scope. In ‘The influence of ‘prompting for value ranking’ on career choices of youth in the Gulf Arab world’ author Khamael Al Safi explored how prioritizing the importance of attribute values influences the career choices of youth. The author also examines how such prompting may impact the labour market.

Finally we conclude with an interview done with Denis Pelletier. This interview is a re-print of an interview conducted in previous years by ContactPoint. For those who may not have been able to read the original, we are glad to be able to provide you with the opportunity now.

In closing, I invite our readers & authors to engage with each other. We must all work together to increase the awareness and benefits of career development.

Rob Shea

Founding Editor

# *Etta St John Wileman Award*

## For Lifetime Achievement in Career Development

This award is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who have devoted their lives to enhancing the field of career development. It honours Etta St John Wileman, a champion and crusader of career, work and workplace development in Canada in the early 20th century.

### **Why this award?**

- Celebrate individuals who have established themselves as leaders within career development.
- Recognize trailblazers who combine being a mentor, educator, advisor, advocate and role model.
- Encourage people in Canada and around the world to celebrate those who have contributed so much to the career development profession.

For full information on nominations and selection, as well as profiles of past winners, visit [ceric.ca/wileman\\_award](http://ceric.ca/wileman_award).

**Nomination deadline: June 30, 2017**

# *Prix Etta-St.-John-Wileman*

## Pour l'oeuvre de toute une vie en développement de carrière

Ce prix vise à souligner et à célébrer l'apport des personnes qui ont consacré toute leur vie à améliorer le domaine du développement de carrière. Ce prix honore la mémoire d'Etta St. John Wileman, fer de lance et apôtre du développement de carrière et de l'amélioration des conditions de travail au Canada au début du XXe siècle.

### **Pourquoi ce prix?**

- Pour rendre hommage à celles et ceux qui se sont forgé une réputation de chefs de file en développement de carrière.
- Pour reconnaître les pionniers qui exercent en même temps le rôle de mentor, d'éducateur, d'auteur, de conseiller, de défenseur et de modèle.
- Pour inciter chacune et chacun au Canada et partout dans le monde à saluer les contributions remarquables à la profession du développement de carrière.

Pour plus d'information sur les nominations et la sélection, ainsi qu'une liste des récipiendaires du prix, visitez [ceric.ca/prix\\_wileman](http://ceric.ca/prix_wileman).

**Date limite : 30 juin 2017**

**ceric.ca** 

# The Gap Year Dilemma: When a Purposeful Gap Year is the Answer to Career Unpreparedness

April Dyrda, University of Calgary  
Laura Hambley, University of Calgary  
Kerry Bernes, University of Lethbridge  
Mike Huston, Mount Royal University

## Abstract

Students entering post-secondary are shown to be increasingly under prepared for the educational and career related demands associated with higher education. Quickly becoming a global trend and an attractive alternative to entering post-secondary directly from high school, a purposeful gap year increases student academic motivation and performance. Despite gaining popularity, there is limited research exploring the implications of the gap year among a North American population. The present study sought to examine how university students come to make career choices and the implications that a gap year has for this process. Two hundred first year undergraduate students studying at a large university in Western Canada completed a survey about their career plans. An analysis of the results comparing gap year and non-gap year students using a non-parametric ANOVA revealed that while students who had taken a gap year benefited from enhanced personal experiences and indicated that taking this time out of school was a positive experience, they continued to lack confidence and clarity regarding their career plans. These and other findings are discussed and serve to enhance an understanding of the potential benefits and implications of a purposeful gap year.

Students' decisions in post-secondary directly influence

their later educational, occupational, and career/life options, making this a critical time for effective career planning. With today's competitive labour market demanding highly educated workers (Harvey, 2000), it is more important than ever for students to prepare themselves for productive employment by establishing a solid educational and experiential foundation.

According to Wilensky (2007), students and employers increasingly view post-secondary education as necessary for successful integration and participation in the workforce. Across North America, approximately 60 percent of students continue their education directly after high school (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2004). Educational systems and society at large expect that these students will not only succeed at the post-secondary level, but that they will also have a clear idea of their career path at this time (Sears, 2004).

Career-ready students are assumed to be actively involved in shaping and directing their lives both now and in the future; having a proactive, resilient, and assertive style of moving towards self-defined career futures (Gysbers & Lapan, 2009). According to Code, Bernes, Gunn, and Bardick (2006), the central factors guiding career development are the readiness to make educational and vocational choices, as well as the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to visualize and plan one's future. While

the importance of career-readiness for making educated and informed career decisions is apparent, there is less certainty about whether or not all students entering post-secondary possess the necessary skills and knowledge.

## Career Unpreparedness of Post-Secondary Students

Career preparation and decision-making is repeatedly cited to be one of the most stressful processes faced by young adults (Bloxom et al., 2008; Gray, Gault, Meyers, & Walther, 1990; Stringer, Kerpelman, & Skorikov, 2012). Developing the career planning confidence and clarity needed to make educated career decisions requires a substantial amount of knowledge not only about career options, but also about oneself (Cherry & Gear, 1987). Unfortunately, many post-secondary entrants lack the breadth of knowledge and understanding about the self and the world of work necessary to be fully prepared for the career demands associated with higher education (Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009).

Although it is generally assumed that the decision to enrol in higher education is informed by one's career readiness and confidence, recent research places the high rates of personal, academic, and career problems at this level as indicative that many post-secondary entrants are woefully unprepared for university life (Pancer et al., 2004). Whether a result of unrealistic ex-



pectations, poor academic adaptation both socially and emotionally (Nel et al., 2009; Pancer et al., 2004), or a lack of fit in one's program of study (Christie, Munro, & Fisher, 2004; Council of Alberta University Students, 2011; Tansey & Keane, 2011), research has consistently found that higher learners are unprepared to make informed educational and career decisions upon commencing their post-secondary studies (Gysbers & Lapan, 2009).

### Implications of Career Unpreparedness

One of the most quantifiable consequences of career unpreparedness among higher learners is attrition. Wilensky (2007) has observed that post-secondary institutions fail to graduate a large number of the students that initially enrol. Forty percent or more of students attending university, college, or another type of post-secondary institution within Canada will drop out before completing their studies (Council of Alberta University Students, 2011; Shaienks, Gluszynski, & Bayard, 2008), and almost half of the students studying towards a four-year degree program in the United States do not graduate (Jansen & Van der Meer, 2012).

Career unpreparedness has additional academic and personal consequences. For example, even if students are choosing to continue their education, being unprepared to make effective career choices at the post-secondary level can lead to increased costs associated with changing majors, taking extra courses, and consequently remaining in school for longer than anticipated. Students who are less prepared for higher education have also been shown to suffer from decreased confidence as well as lower levels of

social adaptation, emotional stability, and self-actualization (Stringer et al., 2012).

If individual learners can develop the career readiness needed to make informed decisions about their post-secondary education with confidence, they will be more prepared for the associated demands, and ultimately gain the self-assuredness necessary to be successful in their endeavours outside of the educational environment (Gysbers & Lapan, 2009). The gap year offers students an increasing popular route to better prepare themselves for post-secondary education and effective career decision-making.

### The Benefits of a Purposeful Gap Year

Defined as a period of time taken 'out' of formal education and training, where that time sits in the context of a longer career trajectory (Heath, 2007), the gap year is quickly becoming a global trend (Stehlik, 2010). Choosing to defer formal study between completing high school and commencing post-secondary education has been well received in many countries, particularly across Europe and Australia, where gap year participation is not only common (with more than 25 percent of students deferring admission), but also encouraged (Curtis, 2014).

One important factor setting the gap year apart from simply taking a year off is that it is purposeful and planned. Without a plan, a year out of formal education is characterized by few ambitions or aspirations about how this time will be spent. Alternatively, a formal gap year is known to offer many significant benefits. Martin (2010) identified three components as being integral to the gap year experience:

intentionality, motivation, and achievement, such that gap year students are necessarily involved in structured activities (e.g., paid-work, volunteerism, and other forms of self-development) directed towards furthering their career pursuits. As a result, students who take a gap year prior to beginning their post-secondary studies exhibit increased self-directness, academic motivation, and maturity, all of which have been shown to increase academic performance in higher education (Heath, 2007; Stehlik, 2010). When compared with students who had not taken a gap year, these individuals were less likely to drop out of university after their first year (McEniry, 2008).

According to Heath (2007), as more graduates enter the labour market with post-secondary qualifications, the value of these credentials declines. Escalating standards for minimum education has made it more important than ever for students to seek experiences that develop skills and competencies not typically made available in a classroom setting. In a labour market where employers place high value on the acquisition of 'soft skills' (e.g., interpersonal skills; organizational skills) (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003), the gap year serves to complement what is gained through post secondary, which tends to favour the development of technical skills (Munro, MacLaine, & Stucky, 2014). As such, industry professionals have recommended that the most effective way to develop soft skills and thus a competitive edge in today's economy is to integrate oneself directly into the workforce (Cappel, 2001; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). While it is possible for all students to gain this experience, the gap year affords individuals the necessary time and



independence to seek and design occupational expertise that serve to further develop these valuable and highly marketable skills.

### Gap Year Suitability and Potential Drawbacks

Despite its proven benefits, the gap year is not indicated for everyone. Individuals who are not highly motivated or career oriented at this stage may find themselves reluctant to continue their formal education the following year. While rare, with up to 90 percent of gap-takers returning to school within the year (American Gap Association, 2012), students must consider the potential impacts of taking a gap year on their longer-term career plans. Career maturity and/or certainty may also play a role in determining the desirability of a gap year.

Individuals with lower academic certainty are both more likely to take a gap year and to benefit from it (Martin, 2010). Accordingly, a gap year is not encouraged for students with high levels of academic certainty. Likewise, students who are committed to enrolling in post-secondary directly after high school should not necessarily be discouraged from doing so, but many of them are likely to benefit from interventions and programming focused on developing career decision-making skills, self-knowledge, and transferable skills.

The gap year can also be associated with certain financial disadvantages. When a tax-advantaged education investment account is involved, withdrawing from formal education, even if just for a year, may invite tax penalties and other unexpected financial costs. As well, taking a poorly planned or budgeted gap year can be costly in itself, par-

ticularly when major expenses such as travel are involved. Individuals considering a gap year are encouraged to address the possible financial implications of doing so prior to making any commitments.

### Limitations of Previous Research

Despite increasing understanding, acceptance, and recognition of the gap year, there is limited research exploring the implications of this experience among a North American population (Strauss, 2012). After completing high school, 27.8 percent of Canadian students defer their post-secondary studies (Shaienks et al., 2008). However, the practice of taking a formal and structured gap year continues to be uncommon in North America. For example, only an estimated 1.2 percent of first-time college freshmen in the United States deferred admission in 2011 to take a gap year, according to the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California. As well, gap year participation rates are significantly lower in North America compared to other parts of the world, such as Norway and Denmark, where upwards of 50 percent of students choose to take a year off before beginning their higher education (American Gap Association, 2012). With gap year research having typically overlooked the population of North American students, additional research into the North American gap year experience would contribute to a better understanding of the potential benefits and the low participation rates by these students.

### The Present Study

The present study makes use of a new self-report scale focusing directly on the student perspective.

While previous research has paid little attention to the perceptions that young people have about their own careers (Code et al., 2006), the present study aims to more precisely identify the processes by which learners themselves come to make career choices, and to determine how gap year participation can influence these decisions. With a sample of post-secondary students currently studying at a large university in Western Canada, the present study provides a unique and largely understudied perspective on the gap year, and how this experience affects the career preparedness and decision-making of higher learners.

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been designed to guide the present study:

### Perceptions of Taking a Gap Year

The proportion of students taking time out of further study after graduating from high school has increased substantially in recent years (Curtis, 2014; Martin, 2010). In fact, the gap year has become so popular in parts of the world such as the United Kingdom and Australia that a 'gap year industry' has emerged (Heath, 2007; Jones, 2004). Through the marketing of guidebooks and services provided by 'time-off consultants,' placement agencies and websites, such as EnRoute Consulting, are assisting young people in planning their gap year by finding them work, volunteer, and travel opportunities relevant to their career interests. More than a year off, the gap year experience is now being sold as an important aspect of career development (Stehlik, 2010).

Despite its popularity, the practice of taking a gap year con-





tinues to be met with hesitation across North America, where participation rates pale in comparison to those of many European countries. According to Martin (2010), the concept of taking time off after high school before enrolling in higher education has only recently emerged in North America and is therefore far from being a formalized or even an accepted part of students' educational careers. Given that the gap year experience remains to be relatively unfamiliar and unsupported among industry professionals and post-secondary institutions, as well as populations of Canadian and American students, it is presumed that the potential benefits of taking time out of formal education are not yet fully understood by most students. In consideration of this interpretation, the following hypothesis has been offered:

**Hypothesis 1.** Students will be neutral towards the idea of taking a gap year.

While gap year participation rates remain low in Canada and across North America, students who have chosen to take a year off after high school prior to beginning their post-secondary studies tend to speak highly of their experience and often benefit both academically and professionally as a result (Jones, 2004). According to Jones (2004), young people demonstrate higher performance outcomes, improved employability, and advancement of a variety of life skills following a gap year. Beyond the advantages in competitive education and the labour market, previous research has also consistently demonstrated that taking a gap year enhances an individual's economic, social, and cultural capital (Ball, Vincent, Kemp, & Pietikainen, 2004; Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Heath, 2007; Power,

Edwards, Whitty, & Wigfall, 2003; Reay, David, & Ball, 2005). With an understanding of the above-mentioned advantages offered by a gap year, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

**Hypothesis 2.** Students who took a gap year will stand by their decision, indicating that taking a year off after high school was a good idea.

### **Influence on Career Preparedness and Planning**

Taking a gap year has in many ways proven to be beneficial for both educational achievement and career decision-making (Jones, 2004). Studies continue to demonstrate that the gap year is an important opportunity for young people to develop clarity in their academic and professional plans, particularly in cases where there is uncertainty in these areas (Martin, 2010).

As an important time for the development of intentions and specific goals, the gap year plays an integral part in the resolution of academic deficits, such that participation can mitigate academic deficits and career choice uncertainty (Martin, 2010). These findings have informed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3.** Gap year students will be significantly more likely than non-gap year students to:

- a. Have a specific career plan
- b. Express greater clarity with regards to their career plan
- c. Have more confidence in their career plan

In addition to supporting academic and career gains, a purposeful gap year can offer substantial personal advantages as well,

providing students with engaging experiences that increase self-awareness and create opportunities for self-reflection (Heath, 2007). According to an independent study of 280 gap year students, the most common outcome of the gap year experience was gaining a better sense of self and a more comprehensive understanding of one's personal values (Haigler & Nelson, 2005). By affording one the time necessary to participate in volunteer work, internships, extracurricular activities, and travel, the gap year experience serves to enhance one's identity, sense of self, and an understanding of personal interests, needs, and values. Accordingly, these experiences facilitate better decision-making, not only related to educational plans, but also to future occupational options (Heath, 2007). The following hypothesis is offered based on this view:

**Hypothesis 4.** Gap year students will rate their overall personal life experiences as being significantly more helpful to their career planning than non-gap year students.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The present study analyzed data collected from 200 first year undergraduate students (157 females and 43 males) currently enrolled in a psychology course at a large university in Western Canada. Students who completed the study ranged in age from 17-20 years old ( $M = 18.07$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), with a total of 30 participants (22 female and 8 male) or 15 percent of the sample indicating that they had taken a gap year prior to beginning their post-secondary studies. All but one of the faculties of this institution



was represented in the sample. For the purpose of this research, a gap year has been defined as exactly one full year taken out of formal education directly after high school and prior to enrolling in post-secondary studies.

## Materials

Survey questions were generated based on an in-depth review of the literature, relevant material from a previously established career development survey titled: "Comprehensive Career Needs Survey" (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002), and information gathered from three focus group sessions previously conducted by researchers of the present study.

The resulting survey instrument consisted of 31 questions targeting three main areas related to the career decision-making processes of post-secondary students. Being an online measure, participants were required to have access to a computer with Internet compatibility in order to complete the survey.

In section one of the survey, participants were asked a series of demographic questions pertaining to information about their age, ethnicity, and the name of the faculty in which they were currently enrolled. The second section of the survey focused on participants' 'Career Plans,' including topics such as the importance of having a career plan (e.g., "How important is career planning to you at this time in your life?"), and a description of participants' current career plan (e.g., "How confident are you about your career plan?").

The third and final section of the survey consisted of questions surrounding the 'Career Planning Supports' available to, and/or used by, participants during high school

and post-secondary education. In the first part of this section, participants were asked to reflect on the availability and usefulness of various career related services or resources while they were in high school (e.g., "Rank the people or sources you felt were most useful or valuable in approaching for help with your career planning in high school"). The second part of this section focused on similar questions, but asked participants to reflect on the availability and usefulness of career related services or resources accessible to them in post-secondary (e.g., "Rate the people or sources you feel are most useful or valuable in approaching for help with your career planning now in post-secondary").

## Procedure

Participants completed the study online through the research participation system available to students attending the university. Prior to beginning the survey, participants were provided a brief introduction, where they were advised that the survey must be completed in one sitting, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Participants were also told that, when given the option, declining to respond to a question was acceptable. It was also made clear that all individual responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

Following this brief introduction, participants were asked to provide their informed consent by indicating whether they would like to participate in the survey. At this point they were free to complete the survey questions at their own pace. The questions were expected to take approximately 15-20 minutes to finish. Upon completing the survey, each participant received 0.5 course

credits for their participation, which could be applied to their grade in an eligible psychology course.

Frequency of scores and percentages for given responses to each question were calculated in aggregate in order to analyze proportions of response tendencies. Isolated individual scores were not considered in the initial data analysis in favour of frequency data of aggregate responses to each question, which was of greatest interest in this study.

## Results

Mann-Whitney U tests were used to interpret and identify any associations in response tendencies between gap year and non-gap year students. A nonparametric test such as the Mann-Whitney U is commonly used in cases where the number of participants in comparison groups is substantially different (i.e., they are not normally distributed), such as the case when comparing gap year and non-gap year students. Scores that produced a comparable alpha value of less than .05 were considered to be statistically significant. Descriptive statistics have also been reported through an analysis of proportions and measures of central tendency in order to summarize response patterns. Through an analysis of significant difference and mean scores from each group, an understanding of their unique and/or similar patterns in responding could be determined.

## Perceptions of Taking a Gap Year

In support of Hypothesis 1, first year university students most commonly reported feeling neutral ( $n = 83$ ; 42%) when asked whether taking a gap year after high school was a good idea ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD =$

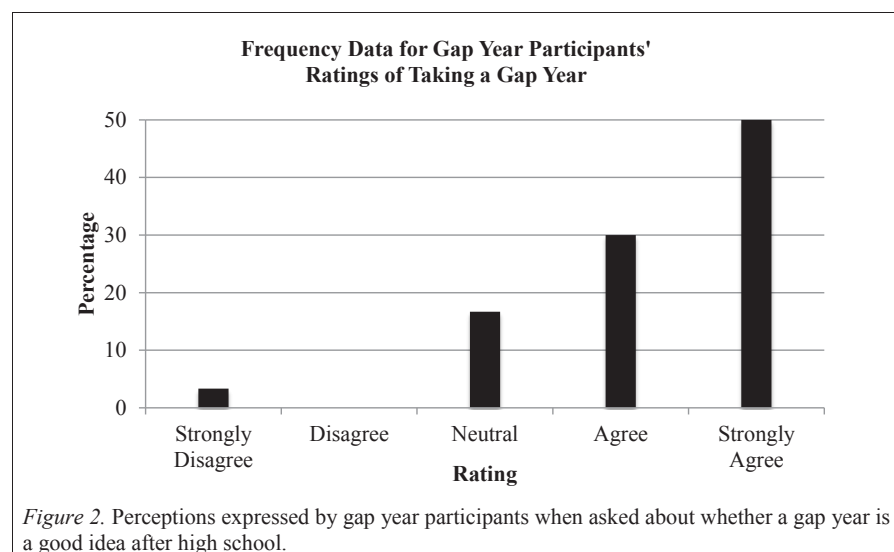
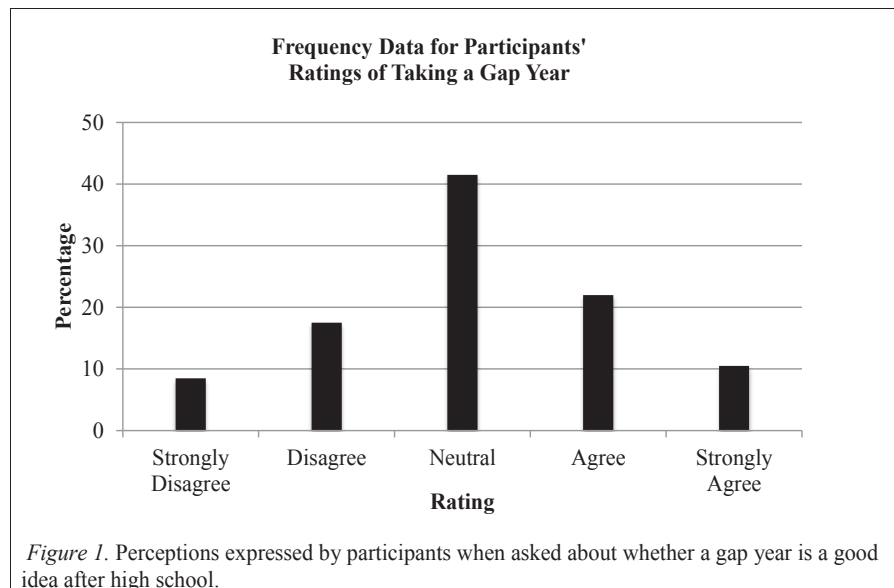


1.07), using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' Of the remaining participants, 33 percent responded favourably to this item, with a total of 44 participants (22%) and 21 participants (11%) indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed that taking a gap year idea was a good idea, respectively. A number of participants also disagreed ( $n = 35$ ; 18%), or otherwise strongly disagreed ( $n = 17$ ; 9%), with the statement (see Figure 1).

In consideration of response tendencies among gap year students, perceptions of taking a year off after high school were significantly more positive ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) than the general sample ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ),  $p < .001$ . In line with Hypothesis 2, the majority of gap year students ( $n = 24$ ; 80%) believed that taking a gap year after high school was a good idea, most commonly indicating that they either strongly agreed ( $n = 15$ ; 50%), or agreed ( $n = 9$ ; 30%) with the statement. A small number of gap year participants expressed feeling neutral ( $n = 5$ ; 17%) towards the concept of taking a gap year, with only one student (3%) indicating that they strongly disagreed with the concept of taking a gap after high school (see Figure 2).

### Influence on Career Preparedness and Planning

Contrary to Hypothesis 3 and much of the literature, gap year students in the present study were no more likely than non-gap year students to have a specific career plan or otherwise express greater clarity and confidence in their career direction. When asked along a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 'very unclear' to 'very clear') about how clear they were about



their career and life plans following post-secondary, gap year students ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) and non-gap year students ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) expressed similar levels of clarity in their perceived career direction,  $p = .356$ . In an analysis of expressed clarity in their current career plans, gap year students ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) did not express any higher clarity than non-gap year students ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ),  $p = .320$ , with both groups feeling only somewhat clear about their current career direction.

Gap year and non-gap year students were also highly similar in

their overall ratings of confidence related to their current career plans when assessed along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'very confident' to 'very unconfident.' While gap year students were presumed to express higher levels of career confidence, ratings made by gap year ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) and non-gap year ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) students were not significantly different,  $p = .681$ .

While there were no significant differences between gap year and non-gap year students in levels of career preparedness and planning, one area in which gap year students



conveyed significantly more growth than non-gap year students was in terms of their personal life experiences. Assessed along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'not at all helpful' to 'very helpful,' gap year students rated their personal life experiences as being significantly more helpful to their career planning ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) than non-gap year students ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $p = .034$ , thereby supporting our hypothesis that life experiences add value to career decision-making.

### Discussion

A better understanding of the ways in which taking a gap year prior to beginning post-secondary can influence an individual's career planning process and decision-making abilities is warranted. While the benefits of taking time off between high school and beginning higher education (e.g., improved soft skill and self-development, shaping social values, and improved adaptation to university life) have been well-studied and supported in other nations (Heath, 2007; Stehlik, 2010), North American students, parents, and professionals are seemingly more hesitant to acknowledge the gap year as a positive learning and growth experience.

According to Hoover (2001), North Americans are generally suspicious of those who choose to get "off the train" to success, even if just for a brief period of time. Rather than a constructive experience, the gap year is perceived as distracting youth from the natural, linear transition between school and further education (Berkner, He, Forrest-Cataldi, & Knepper, 2003). These commonly held perceptions are consistent with the North American trend of learners choosing to forgo the gap year experience. In

2011, only 1.2 percent of first-time college students in the U.S. deferred admission to take a gap year, whereas 7 percent of students in the United Kingdom and 11 percent of students in Australia deferred post-secondary education in favour of a gap year (Strauss, 2012). There is currently not an equivalent data available for Canadian students.

Uncertainty and hesitation about the gap year was reflected in participant responses, which indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea of taking a gap year. Despite the neutral response of most participants, 80 percent of those individuals who did choose to take time out of their formal studies between high school and post-secondary indicated that they agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (50%) that taking a gap year was a good idea. While this result is understandable given the existence of a conceivable choice-supportive bias among gap year participants, it does serve to support the potential value of a gap year.

A factor that likely contributed to this positive reaction by gap year students is the life experience gained, adding to their development on both a career and personal level. Brown and colleagues (2003) found that students who took a gap year expressed greater levels of self-awareness and maturity after their year out of formal education. In the current study, gap year participants rated their personal experiences as having significantly more influence on their career planning than non-gap year students, a finding supported in the literature. The potential advantages afforded students who participate in a purposeful gap year have been well documented, particularly the development of soft skills and other aspects of identity associated with career readiness

(Heath, 2007; King, 2011).

Despite identifying the personal benefits associated with taking a gap, participants in the current study made no connection between self-development and positive career outcomes or educational growth and confidence. While participants were able to recognize the more immediate, personal advantages gained by taking a gap year, academic and professional benefits were not identified.

### Implications

First and foremost, for gap year participation to be a viable option for North American students, hesitation towards and misinformation about this experience must be addressed. It is essential that all stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, educational institutions, teachers, and career practitioners) have a working definition of what is meant by a purposeful gap year as well as a better understanding of the potential benefits offered. Further, success stories from gap year participants reporting that personal experiences enriched their career decision-making process need to be more widely disseminated. Examples such as those offered in King's (2011) article about young people's accounts of taking a gap year, as well as in the recently published book *The Complete Guide to the Gap Year* (White, 2009), provide meaningful examples of the gap year experience and its associated benefits.

**Re-conceptualizing the gap year.** According to Heath (2007), the difference between a year away from school and a purposeful gap year is that the latter demands structure and some level of productivity. By intention, the gap year is considered an important component



existing within, and contributing to, the context of a longer-term career trajectory (Jones, 2004). It is therefore characterized by planned, effective, and structured activities associated with career development. To bolster awareness and acceptance of this working definition, stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, educators, and other professionals) ought to be aware of both the potential short- and long-term benefits, as well as possible shortcomings, experienced by students who participate in the gap year experience.

### Implications for students.

More than any other outcome, gap year students reported that their personal experiences benefited from taking time away from formal education. Gap year participation increases self-directedness and self-development, thereby enhancing focus, motivation, as well as commitment in future higher education and work experiences (Martin, 2010). Personal experiences afforded students during their gap year also work to bolster their ability to adapt to the demands both of university life and future employment opportunities (Stehlik, 2010). According to Brown and colleagues (2003), as a growing number of individuals enter the labour market with post-secondary qualifications, personal qualities are more highly valued. Employers are therefore increasingly seeking out the skills that gap-year students tend to develop, such as enhanced self-awareness, the acquisition of soft skills, as well as increased independence and maturity.

Gap year students in the present study identified personal life experiences as helpful to their career planning. However, clarity and confidence in one's career plans were no different from non-gap year

students. There are many possible reasons why this may have been the case, some of which have been identified in the limitations. Regardless, it appears that what is missing for participants who took a gap year is a clear connection between, and understanding of, how these personal experiences explicitly impacted their career confidence and clarity.

One practical solution is for students to engage in more accurate self-assessment, such as through the creation of a career portfolio. According to Saunders and Zuzel (2010), students who develop and maintain a portfolio that showcases their achievements (including both formal and informal certificates, awards, nominations, and achievements) are able to more accurately reflect on their competencies and abilities. Not only does this create an opportunity for one to organize information and documents relevant to career planning, but it also helps to facilitate self-awareness of skills and experiences (Cappel, 2001). More recently, career portfolios have been modernized and re-invented to include digital elements, such as LinkedIn profiles.

**Implications for counsellors.** Counsellors can play a role in strengthening student recognition of the association between personal experiences and competence as a professional. Individual counselling offers one path, but community initiatives and larger school system promotions are apt to inform a wider demographic. Because of their role in facilitating student development, counsellors are afforded a platform to advocate for the importance of career development and employability skills through school, work, extracurricular, and volunteer experiences. For example, hosting an information

session for prospective high school graduates would provide an outlet for practitioners to facilitate conversations explaining the purposeful gap year, along with the types of skills and competencies expected of new entrants to the workplace. While an initiative such as this would be best served in partnership with and through the support of industry, government, and post-secondary institutions, counsellors play an important part as helping professionals in bringing these conversations to life.

Counsellors also play a key role in normalizing and validating career indecision and noting the developmental nature of effective career decision-making. Rather than focusing on the task of career commitment, counsellors are encouraged to emphasize the importance of this time for students to gather information about both themselves and the world of work for the purpose of career exploration. Further, emphasizing the global normality and the potential benefits of a gap year is likely to make it a feasible option for certain students. For the sake of informed decision-making, it is also important to provide accurate information about the potential drawbacks (e.g., financial) along with the benefits offered by this experience.

While some students and practitioners may be inclined to concentrate on the criteria for a particular occupation of interest, counsellors are encouraged instead to explore with students what they can learn about themselves through the process of a more general career search. In doing so, students are provided the opportunity to discover the transferable and personal skills they possess that may lend them to a variety of career paths, rather than feeling restricted by the demands of a particular occupation. With



an orientation towards individual interests, values, knowledge, and strengths, counsellors can help to encourage open-mindedness towards and meaning making of the career planning process, and in so doing, further develop the confidence that students have in their abilities and professional capacities.

For those individuals who express a lack of career confidence or readiness, the benefits of a gap year can be profound. To ensure that students are getting the most out of this experience both personally and professionally, it is important for counsellors to encourage suitable students (i.e., those individuals identified as career-unprepared or undecided and who intend to use time away from formal education to engage in self- and career-exploration) to consider the possibility of taking a structured, purposeful gap year. Counsellors can also play a role in the process of shaping and structuring the gap year, thereby increasing the likelihood of creating an experience characterized by involvement in career-related endeavours (e.g., through networking, volunteering, internship or externship work, and conducting informational interviews). This process will likely maximize skill development, as well as the personal and professional benefits afforded students by the gap year experience.

### Limitations

There are several potential limitations to the findings of the present study. First, generalizability of results may be restricted given the distinct characteristics of this sample. For one, the number of gap year students who participated in the present study ( $n = 30$ ) was small in comparison to the total number of participants ( $n = 200$ ).

While significant results were found, it is believed that a larger sample of gap year students would have allowed for greater reliability, and as a result a closer estimate of both true and meaningful effects on a number of variables. Another factor contributing to the limitations of generalizability is that all participants were first year undergraduate students who attended the same university. The sample not only lacked diversity among university students, but also across types of post-secondary institutions, such as colleges, vocational schools, polytechnics and institutes of technology. The emphasis on career and career-related opportunities offered to students has been shown to differ considerably depending on the type of post-secondary institution that one attends (Canadian Information Center for International Credentials, 2009). To better understand in what ways the orientation of higher educational institutions towards career development interacts with and influences students' experiences of career confidence, preparedness, and perceptions of taking a gap year, a more diverse and representative sample of higher learners would be beneficial.

A second limitation of the present study is that a number of within-group differences were not considered. For example, unmeasured factors, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, have been shown to contribute to levels of career preparedness among students (Creed & Patton, 2003; Hirschi, 2011; Skorikov, 2007). Important precursors to what constitutes an effective gap year, such as differences in levels of career productivity (i.e., time spent exploring one's career and life ambitions either through working, volunteering, or another form of self-exploration), and dis-

tinctions in purposefulness were also not accounted for. By homogenizing gap year students, the present study failed to acknowledge the variability in students' motivation towards and engagement in productive work or educational experiences, and as a result may have contributed to a limited understanding of the positive effects a truly purposeful gap year has on career decision-making and confidence. By neglecting to control for these variables, it may be that results were confounded by relevant extraneous variables, such as the amount of active career preparation and/or exploration engaged in during the gap year, previous work experience, and baseline levels of career readiness.

Another important limitation that must be considered given the design of the present study is the potential flaws associated with the collection of retrospective self-report data. New students typically approach the transition to university with boundless idealism and confidence in their educational and career aspirations, which often does not end up matching the reality of their experience at the post-secondary level (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012; Hansen, 1998). This means that there may be a propensity for students to overestimate their career confidence (Nel, Troskie-Bruin, & Bitzer, 2009), and more specifically, the impact that taking a gap year had on their readiness. Individuals also tend to endorse their actions through a choice-supportive bias. In this sense, gap year participants' high ratings of their experience may be influenced by a desire to see this occurrence as more positive and efficacious than it was in reality.

It is worth noting that all of the students who completed the survey had less than one semester of experience at the post-secondary



level, limiting opportunities to apply or otherwise realize the potential influences and impact that taking a gap year had on either their academic or professional experiences. With the knowledge that high school graduates tend to have difficulty envisaging and predicting their experiences in university (Briggs et al., 2012), it is likely the case that students were limited in their ability to comprehend the applicability of their gap year to post-secondary and career-related development.

Had this study been undertaken at a time when participants were advanced further in their education and career, the correlated benefits may have been more apparent to students and thereby reflected in their responses. For example, in the case that this research had been conducted longitudinally, retrospectively towards the end of one's degree program, or after transitioning from academia to the workforce, students would have had greater exposure to a variety of academic and professional environments in which to apply their self-development skills and knowledge (e.g., resume development, job interviews, work settings, team-based projects). As such, students might have developed a greater awareness and understanding of the personal and professional benefits of the gap year.

Finally, recent research has found that students who choose to take a gap year before enrolling in post-secondary typically have lower school achievement, as well as greater career uncertainty, compared to those students who choose to enrol directly from high school into post-secondary (Birch & Miller, 2007; Curtis, 2014). Given that pretesting of participants was not possible as a result of the retrospective design of the present study,

it is difficult to determine whether gap year and non-gap year students expressed equivalent levels of these characteristics prior to beginning post-secondary. As a result, the potential for pre-existing baseline differences between groups makes the present study susceptible to error in the evaluated magnitude of within-group differences (i.e., an underestimation of gains in career preparedness and certainty among gap-year students). In this case, while levels of preparedness may have increased from taking a gap-year, this change would not have been observed in a between-group comparison.

### Future Directions

Future explorations of this topic should consider conducting research with a more diverse and representative sample of gap-takers and post-secondary students. It will be important for prospective research to incorporate a wider demographic of students studying across a variety of post-secondary institutions so as to capture a more complete and expansive understanding of the gap year experience, and further validate findings of the present study. It is also recommended that future research address potential within group differences, particularly among those who have previously taken a gap year. This would include measures of personal factors such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, as well as an analysis of the productivity and engagement of students' in relevant educational and career related opportunities during their gap year.

To expand on this, given the potential for fundamental differences to exist between-groups in levels of career confidence and preparedness, it would also be beneficial for future research to be conducted longitudinally

within-groups. To more precisely understand the possible baseline differences in levels of career confidence between gap year and non-gap year students, a within-group assessment of career confidence ratings both before and after starting post-secondary is needed. Additionally, a longitudinal analysis of career confidence after completing post-secondary that accounts for potential baseline differences between gap year and non-gap year students is warranted. By establishing a relative scale of measurement for career confidence within each group, a more accurate assessment of effect size and understanding of the implications that taking a gap year has on levels of career confidence can be realized. With recognition of the limitations presented by self-report data, particularly in cases where a choice-supportive bias is likely to occur (such as among gap-takers), more objective measures of efficacy are also required. It is recommended that future research analyzing the effects and implications of taking a gap year on students' career readiness make use of implicit measures so as to avoid social as well as self-desirable response biases.

For the gap year to be implemented most effectively, it is essential that future research and other initiatives consider the possibility of a structured gap year program that incorporates stakeholders at all levels (i.e., students, career and guidance counsellors, teachers, parents, government, industry, and post-secondary institutions). A program that allows for partnerships between those with a vested interest in its success will not only allow for greater recognition of and engagement in the gap year experience, but it will also create opportunities for evaluation. Implementing measurable objectives for the participants



and other stakeholders, such as pre and post tests and longitudinal surveys, will capture the data required to more accurately determine the value and potential benefits of the gap year.

### Conclusion

Increasingly, high school graduates are choosing to take time out from their formal studies prior to beginning post-secondary education (Martin, 2010). Given that higher levels of education, training, and soft skill development are demanded of our working population, with up to 80% of jobs created in Alberta over the next 10 years requiring a post-secondary credential (Council of Alberta University Students, 2011), it is more important than ever for students entering post-secondary to be confident in their career planning and decision-making abilities. While many students still lack confidence upon beginning their post-secondary studies, gap year participation has been shown to correlate with improved tertiary academic performance as well as provide a competitive edge in the workforce (Hoover, 2001). Unfortunately, many of these benefits are misunderstood in North America, where the gap year is in many ways misconstrued as a period of inactivity. Contrary to these perceptions, the present study has demonstrated that the gap year is not only conceived of positively by those who partook, but it was also a contributing factor to enhancing personal experiences and student knowledge. If perceptions of the gap year can be changed and students are educated about the benefits of being proactive in their time away from formal education, it is believed that the full academic and professional potential

of the gap year experience can be realized.

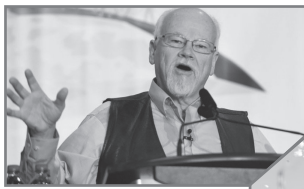
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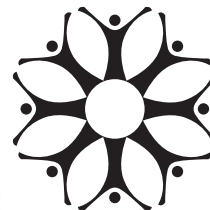
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# Effet de l'information sur le marché du travail (IMT): Comparaison entre l'utilisation autonome et assistée de l'IMT

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## Résumé

D'après une importante méta-analyse (Brown et Ryan Krane, 2000), l'information sur le marché du travail (IMT) est un ingrédient critique à l'atteinte des objectifs de carrière des personnes. La présente étude a pour but de vérifier l'effet de l'utilisation de l'IMT, soit avec l'aide d'un conseiller ou sans son aide, et ce, en tenant compte de la possible présence d'effets différen-

tiels liés au besoin de consultation des clients (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi). Pour ce faire, des personnes (n = 203) consultant dans des Centres d'emploi situés au Nouveau-Brunswick et en Saskatchewan ont été assignées de manière aléatoire à une méthode autonome (utilisation de l'IMT sans l'assistance d'un conseiller) ou assistée (utilisation de l'IMT avec l'assistance d'un conseiller). Les résultats suggèrent que l'effet de l'IMT dans le temps, bien qu'il soit significatif chez les deux groupes, s'avère plus important lorsque les participants sont assistés par un conseiller. Sur le plan de la signification clinique, cet effet est de taille moyenne (Cohen, 1988). Ce résultat ne diffère pas significativement selon le besoin de consultation des participants.

L'information sur le marché du travail (IMT) est une composante importante du développement de carrière des personnes (Gati et Tal, 2008; Gysbers, Heppner et Johnston, 2014; Patton et McCrindle, 2001; Sampson, Reardon, Peterson et Lenz, 2004; Savickas, 1999). En effet, « la cueillette d'information augmente la connaissance de soi et aide à prendre conscience des choix de formation et de carrière qui conviennent le mieux » (Savickas, 1999, p. 61). D'ailleurs, une importante méta-analyse (Brown et Ryan Krane, 2000) rapporte que l'apport d'information sur le marché du travail est un des cinq ingrédients critiques à l'atteinte des objectifs de carrière des personnes. Cet ingrédient apparaît d'autant plus

important à considérer étant donné que l'obtention d'information sur le marché du travail est souvent un besoin et une demande explicite de la part des clients (Masdonati, Perdrix, Massoudi et Rossier, 2014; Multon, Wood, Heppner et Gysbers, 2007; Rochlen, Milburn et Hill, 2004). Bien que l'IMT soit disponible en grande quantité, elle est souvent inexacte, biaisée et donc questionable sur le plan de sa qualité (Gati et Levin, 2015). D'après une revue de littérature (Savard, Michaud, Bilodeau et Arseneau, 2007) au-delà de sa quantité, de sa qualité et de son accessibilité, l'IMT aurait un effet appréciable pour le développement de carrière seulement dans la mesure où elle est transmise par l'intermédiaire d'un conseiller. De l'avis de ces auteurs, on pourrait penser que le conseiller joue un rôle important pour aider les individus à être plus réceptifs à de nouvelles informations potentiellement utiles au développement de carrière. Si l'on se réfère aux résultats d'une étude de Foskett et Hemsley-Brown (1999), on peut également penser que cette assistance est importante sachant que certaines personnes ignorent des informations pertinentes à leur développement de carrière lorsqu'elles ne sont pas directement en lien avec leurs intérêts. Cela pourrait s'expliquer par le fait que l'individu aurait tendance à s'intéresser à l'information dans un rapport de désirabilité (Baltz, 1995) et d'ouverture sélective, retenant davantage l'information qui renforce ce qu'il sait déjà (Bougnoux, 1995).



Ainsi, en dépit du fait que les personnes puissent accéder facilement à des outils d'IMT informatisés destinés à leur fournir de l'information utile à leur développement de carrière, pour Amundson (2000) « ces outils ne sont efficaces que s'ils sont intégrés dans des relations de counseling positives » (p. 45). Dans cette optique, selon Savard et al. (2007) il se pourrait également « que l'information en soi n'est pas suffisante pour guider les individus dans leur orientation. Sans accompagnement adéquat, ils ne sont pas en mesure de considérer tout l'information nécessaire pour faire un choix éclairé » (p. 166). Au même titre, dans un monde du travail en constante mutation (Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques, 2013), chaque individu a son propre cheminement de carrière de sorte qu'il « peut y avoir des besoins différents de clarification de l'information et des questions différentes relative à leur propre situation » (Savard et al., 2007, p. 163). Ce qui renvoie également à l'importance d'offrir une information personnalisée qui prend en considération le besoin de l'individu et sa situation personnelle (Savard, Gingras et Turcotte, 2002) tant pour effectuer ses choix de carrière que pour faciliter son insertion en emploi.

Eu égard à ce qui précède, bien que les études antérieures suggèrent un effet positif de l'IMT pour le développement de carrière et que celui-ci soit maximisé par le biais de la transmission par le conseiller, Savard et al. (2007) relèvent plusieurs lacunes méthodologiques sur le plan de la validité interne et externe limitant considérablement la portée de ce résultat. De ce nombre, on constate d'abord que les études antérieures n'ont pas isolé l'effet de l'utilisation de l'IMT des autres

composantes des interventions en counseling de carrière qui ne sont pas directement liées à l'IMT (p. ex. : questionnaires de connaissance de soi, exploration et clarification des intérêts, valeurs et aptitudes). Condition essentielle pour s'assurer que les effets observés sur le développement de carrière découlent de l'utilisation de l'IMT et non pas des autres composantes des interventions en counseling de carrière. De plus, on constate que les études antérieures ne considèrent pas l'influence des besoins de consultation individuels des clients (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi) dans ce résultat. Également, la plupart des études datent de plus d'une vingtaine d'années, ce qui fait en sorte qu'elles ne tiennent pas compte de la plus grande accessibilité de l'IMT à la clientèle, notamment, par le biais d'Internet.

### Objectifs de l'étude

En lien avec les lacunes méthodologiques mentionnées précédemment, la présente étude a pour but de vérifier l'effet de l'utilisation de l'IMT, soit avec l'aide d'un conseiller ou sans son aide, et ce, en tenant compte de la possible présence d'effets différentiels liés au besoin de consultation des clients (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi).

Plus précisément, on retrouve deux objectifs:

*Premier objectif : Vérifier dans quelle mesure la méthode assistée augmente-t-elle l'effet de l'utilisation de l'IMT par le client en comparaison avec la méthode autonome de l'IMT par le client.*

*Deuxième objectif : Analyser la présence d'effets différentiels de la méthode assistée en comparai-*

*son avec la méthode autonome de l'IMT selon le besoin de consultation des clients (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi).*

### Méthode<sup>1</sup>

#### Participants

On compte 228 personnes qui ont pris part à l'étude. Cependant, 20 personnes ont interrompu leur participation alors que cinq n'ont pas rempli en totalité les questionnaires. L'échantillon de participants retenu dans cette étude compte donc 203 personnes, soit 104 femmes (51 %) et 99 hommes (49 %) âgés de 19 à 64 ans (M = 41 ans) ayant consulté dans des Centres d'emploi situés dans les provinces du Nouveau-Brunswick et de la Saskatchewan. Cent vingt personnes de l'échantillon résident au Nouveau-Brunswick, dont 71 (57 %) ont l'anglais comme langue primaire et 52 (43 %) le français. Les 83 personnes qui résident en Saskatchewan ont l'anglais comme langue primaire. Vingt-quatre personnes (12 %) ont rapporté détenir un niveau inférieur au diplôme d'études secondaires, 23 (11 %) ont complété un diplôme d'études secondaires, 35 (17 %) ont une certification professionnelle terminée, 49 (24 %) ont un diplôme d'études collégiales, 34 (17 %) ont complété un baccalauréat, 5 personnes (2 %) ont obtenu une maîtrise et 33 personnes (16 %) n'ont pas indiqué leur niveau de formation. Au début de l'étude, du nombre des 203 personnes, 157 (77 %) n'occupaient pas d'emploi, 26 (13 %) étaient en emploi à temps partiel, 19 (9 %) étaient en emploi à temps plein et une seule personne n'a pas indiqué son statut d'emploi.



## Instrument

Pour mesurer l'effet de l'IMT dans cette étude, un questionnaire auto-rapporté basé sur le cadre d'évaluation du Groupe de recherche canadien sur des données probantes (GDRC), a été construit spécifiquement pour cette étude (voir Baudouin, Bezanson, Borgen, Goyer, Hiebert, Lalande et al., 2007). Dans le cadre de la présente étude, plusieurs chercheurs du GDRC se sont entendus pour identifier les items correspondant le mieux au cadre d'évaluation. Le questionnaire comporte 14 items (cotés sur une échelle de Likert en cinq points graduée de 0 à 4), lesquels se classent en trois catégories d'effets pouvant survenir chez le client à la suite de sa participation aux interventions : changements dans *ses connaissances*<sup>2</sup> (4 items) relatives à l'IMT, changements dans *ses compétences*<sup>3</sup> (5 items) à utiliser l'IMT et changements dans *ses attributs personnels*<sup>4</sup> (5 items) (plus précisément dans sa confiance et son optimisme). Un score élevé dans ces trois catégories suggère un niveau élevé de connaissances et de compétences relatives à l'IMT ainsi qu'un niveau élevé de confiance et d'optimisme.

L'analyse des items et de la structure du questionnaire furent effectués à partir des données de cette étude. Les corrélations entre chaque item et le score total de la sous-échelle à laquelle il appartient sont plus élevées que la corrélation avec le score total des deux autres sous-échelles. Néanmoins, une analyse factorielle exploratoire avec rotation oblique suggère la présence d'un seul facteur, lequel explique 57 % de la variance dans les résultats. De plus, l'indice Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin pour la mesure de la qualité de l'échantillonnage est de 0,947. Cet

indice est considéré comme étant excellent (Field, 2009; Tabachnick et Fidell, 2001). Pour cette raison, on conserve uniquement le score à l'échelle globale lequel fournit une estimation des effets relatifs aux connaissances et compétences relatives à l'IMT ainsi qu'une estimation du niveau de confiance et d'optimisme par rapport à l'atteinte de son objectif de carrière.

Le questionnaire présente un coefficient de cohérence interne (alpha de Cronbach) de 0,94 pour l'échelle globale, ce qui représente une fidélité élevée (Bernaud, 2014). Il est à noter que ce coefficient est identique pour les participants ayant complété la version francophone et pour les participants ayant complété la version anglophone du questionnaire. En concordance avec les indicateurs d'effets du GDRC, un item à choix de réponses dichotomiques (oui/non) a également été ajouté au questionnaire pour évaluer l'incidence de l'effet de l'IMT dans la poursuite des prochaines étapes liées au choix de carrière ou à la recherche d'emploi. Plus précisément, cet item évalue si les personnes clientes ont un plan d'action visant à leur permettre d'utiliser les documents et les ressources d'information acquises durant l'étude.

## Procédure

L'étude a duré environ trois mois. Les chercheurs de l'étude ont d'abord effectué des entrevues avec les conseillers qui sont les personnes chargées d'offrir les services aux clients afin d'établir un protocole standard d'évaluation initiale de l'employabilité permettant d'identifier le besoin de consultation : choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi. Ensuite, des cartables en matière d'IMT ont été conçus spécifiquement pour le choix de carrière et la

recherche d'emploi.

Un soin particulier a été apporté à l'élaboration des cartables, de manière à s'assurer que l'utilisation de l'IMT, s'avère l'ingrédient actif des changements observés chez les clients. Le cartable lié au choix de carrière fournit des ressources privilégiées en IMT visant la connaissance des professions, la connaissance du marché du travail et l'élaboration d'un plan d'action. Le cartable contient également des conseils pour accéder à ces ressources, des lignes directrices pour interpréter l'information et l'apparier à des caractéristiques de la personne ainsi que des suggestions pour intégrer l'information à un plan d'action. Le cartable lié à la recherche d'emploi, quant à lui, fournit des ressources privilégiées en IMT visant la préparation (p. ex. : curriculum vitae), la recherche (p. ex. : réseautage) et l'obtention d'un emploi (p. ex. : conditions de l'emploi). Il contient également des conseils pour accéder à ces ressources, des lignes directrices pour interpréter l'information ainsi que des suggestions pour intégrer l'information à un plan d'action.

Par la suite, la sélection des participants s'est effectuée de manière délibérée. Les clients se présentent dans les Centres d'emploi pour leur choix de carrière ou leur recherche d'emploi et se soumettent à une entrevue initiale d'évaluation de leur employabilité, et ce, selon la pratique courante de ces centres. Aux clients identifiés comme ayant des besoins de consultation reliés au choix de carrière ou à la recherche d'emploi, l'opportunité a été offerte de participer à la présente étude. Ils ont eu droit à une explication concernant la nature de la recherche, ainsi qu'à une description de ce qui était attendu de leur part, de l'implication des conseillers et des



conditions requises pour obtenir des honoraires de 100 \$ pour leur participation. Les clients qui se sont portés volontaires pour participer ont ensuite signé un formulaire de consentement libre et éclairé, après quoi ils ont été assignés, de manière aléatoire en alternance entre la méthode autonome (utilisation des cartables IMT sans l'assistance d'un conseiller) ou assistée (utilisation des cartables IMT avec l'assistance d'un conseiller) et, de manière délibérée, au type d'intervention qui correspond au besoin de consultation identifié, soit le choix de carrière ou la recherche d'emploi.

Par la suite, tous les clients ont reçu un cartable IMT visant à les soutenir dans leur démarche, et ce, indépendamment de la méthode à laquelle ils ont été assignés. Pour ce qui est de la méthode assistée, les clients ont participé à deux rencontres d'information et conseils d'une durée de 20 à 30 minutes chacune. Les rencontres se déroulent en deux étapes. Dans la première, le conseiller fait un rappel de l'objectif du client et des démarches à réaliser pour atteindre son objectif. Dans la deuxième étape, il donne des informations et conseils en matière d'IMT. Ces conseils ont pour objectifs de s'assurer que les clients soient en mesure de trouver les ressources dont ils ont besoin, qu'ils traitent et comprennent l'information adéquatement et qu'ils soient en mesure de relier des informations sur le marché du travail avec des informations sur eux-mêmes.

### Plan de recherche

La présente étude emploie un plan factoriel incorporant deux niveaux de temps (avant et après l'intervention). Un devis *Post-Pré-évaluation* a été retenu, celui-ci étant un moyen d'évaluer

les changements auto-rapportés par les clients en termes de connaissances, de compétences et d'attributs personnels en un seul temps de mesure, ce qui signifie qu'ils ont rempli les questionnaires post-test et prétest lors d'une même évaluation. Pour le prétest, ils répondent en se référant aux connaissances, compétences et attributs personnels qu'ils jugeaient posséder au début de l'étude et pour le post-test, en se référant aux connaissances, compétences et attributs personnels qu'ils considèrent posséder au moment de l'évaluation. L'évaluation *Post-Pré* a eu lieu quatre semaines après la fin de l'étude. Ce type d'évaluation vise à répondre aux problèmes que peut engendrer l'approche traditionnelle pré-post qui, dans ce contexte de recherche, peut s'avérer être une évaluation imprécise de l'effet de l'intervention (Rockwell et Kohn, 1989), en raison du fait que les résultats au prétest sont souvent surestimés (Drennan et Hyde, 2008; Pratt, McGuigan et Katzev, 2000). Cela peut s'expliquer par le fait que les participants, au début de l'expérimentation, ne détiennent pas les connaissances nécessaires pour bien répondre aux questions demandées au début d'un programme d'intervention, ce qui peut invalider l'idée même d'un prétest. Dans cette perspective, le fait de poser les questions de post-test et de prétest à la fin du programme d'intervention permet de s'assurer que les participants à l'étude ont les connaissances nécessaires pour bien répondre aux questions et qu'ils possèdent le même cadre de référence durant les deux évaluations (Drennan et Hyde, 2008).

## Résultats

### Analyses préliminaires

Des tests *t* pour échantillons indépendants ont été effectués pour vérifier l'équivalence des groupes de comparaison. Un premier test *t* suggère que l'on ne retrouve pas de différence statistiquement significative ( $t = ,594$ , ns.) entre le score global au prétest des participants ayant été assignés à la méthode assistée ( $M = 23,19$ ;  $é.t. = 11,5$ ) et celui des participants ayant été assignés à la méthode autonome ( $M = 24,02$ ;  $é.t. = 11,1$ ). Un deuxième test *t* suggère que l'on retrouve une différence statistiquement significative ( $t = 5,49$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) entre le score global au prétest des participants ayant consulté pour un besoin de consultation reliée à la recherche d'emploi ( $M = 19,87$ ;  $é.t. = 10,37$ ) et celui des participants ayant consulté pour un besoin de consultation reliée au choix de carrière ( $M = 28,02$ ;  $é.t. = 10,74$ ). Cela signifie que les participants ayant consulté pour un besoin relié à la recherche d'emploi rapportent à l'amorce de l'étude un niveau plus élevé de connaissances et de compétences en matière d'IMT ainsi qu'un niveau plus élevé d'optimisme et de confiance en vertu de leur score à l'échelle globale.

### Score global

Dans le but de répondre aux deux objectifs de cette étude, une analyse de variance à mesures répétées comprenant trois facteurs, soit le temps de mesure (avant-après), la méthode assignée (autonome ou assistée) et l'intervention reçue selon les besoins de consultation (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi), a été effectuée avec le score global comme mesure dépendante. Les résultats présents dans le tableau 1 in-



diquent d'abord que les scores dans le temps (T) sont significativement plus élevés après qu'avant l'intervention, ( $F = 796,11$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ,  $\eta^2 = ,785$ ). Sur le plan de sa signification clinique, cet effet est de grande taille (Cohen, 1988).

L'effet principal de la méthode (M) est non significatif ( $F = 0,52$ , ns). Cela signifie qu'en considérant les scores sans égard aux temps de mesure, les moyennes de l'un ou de l'autre groupe ne diffèrent pas de façon significative. Néanmoins, l'interaction temps (T) méthode (M) est significative, ( $F = 9,15$  ;  $p < 0,01$ ,  $\eta^2 = ,052$ ) ce qui signifie que l'effet de l'IMT dans le temps, bien qu'il soit significatif chez les deux groupes, s'avère plus important lorsque les clients sont assistés par un conseiller. Sur le plan de sa signification clinique, cet effet est de taille moyenne (Cohen, 1988). Dans ce sens, en lien direct avec le premier objectif de la recherche, ce résultat suggère que l'assistance offerte par un conseiller augmente significativement l'effet dans le temps de l'utilisation de l'IMT par le participant sur le plan du score à l'échelle globale en comparaison avec l'usage autonome de l'IMT.

D'autre part, on observe que l'effet principal de l'intervention (I)

pour le choix de carrière ou de recherche d'emploi est significatif ( $F = 25,05$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ,  $\eta^2 = ,12$ ) indiquant ainsi que sans égard aux temps de mesure, les participants ayant reçu l'intervention en recherche d'emploi obtiennent des scores plus élevés que ceux ayant reçu l'intervention en choix de carrière. Sur le plan de sa signification clinique, cet effet est de grande taille (Cohen, 1988). De plus, l'interaction significative temps (T) intervention (I), ( $F = 13,32$  ;  $p < 0,01$ ,)  $\eta^2 = ,06$ ) suggère que l'effet de l'IMT dans le temps, bien qu'il soit significatif pour les participants ayant pris part aux deux types d'intervention s'avère plus important lorsqu'ils ont reçu l'intervention en choix de carrière. Sur le plan de sa signification clinique, cet effet est de taille moyenne (Cohen, 1988). Ce résultat demeure important à interpréter avec prudence étant donné que les analyses préliminaires montrent que le score global des participants ayant reçu l'intervention en choix de carrière est plus faible à l'amorce de l'étude ce qui suggère que ces deux groupes ne sont pas équivalents. L'interaction méthode (M) intervention (I) est non significative ( $F = 1,62$ , ns), ce qui indique qu'indépendamment du temps de mesure, les scores des personnes

ayant reçu l'intervention de choix de carrière et de recherche d'emploi ne diffèrent pas significativement peu importe la méthode utilisée (autonome ou assistée). Dans ce sens, en lien direct avec le deuxième objectif de la recherche, l'interaction temps (T) méthode (M) intervention (I) est également non significative ( $F = 1,64$ , ns). Ce résultat signifie que l'effet de l'IMT dans le temps constaté comme étant plus important chez les participants ayant été assignés à la méthode assistée ne diffère pas significativement selon l'intervention reçue (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi). Il semble donc que la méthode assistée contribue à un effet plus important de l'IMT dans le temps et que cet effet ne varie pas selon l'intervention reçue.

**Plan d'action**

Dans le but de répondre aux deux objectifs de l'étude, des analyses sont effectuées pour vérifier dans quelle mesure la méthode assistée dans l'utilisation de l'IMT en comparaison avec la méthode autonome de l'IMT, a-t-elle une incidence par rapport au fait d'avoir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. On observe d'abord dans le tableau 2 que parmi les 94 participants ayant

Tableau 1  
Anova comparant les scores moyens globaux Avant et Après par type d'intervention et sur deux méthodes

Méthode	Choix de carrière		Recherche d'emploi		Total		F									
	Avant	Après	Avant	Après	Avant	Après										
	n	M (ET)	M (ET)	n	M (ET)	M (ET)	n	M (ET)	M (ET)	T (p)	M (p)	I (p)	T x M (p)	T x I (p)	M x I (p)	T x M x I (p)
Autonome	63	21,49 (11,01)	42,05 (10,71)	46	27,52 (10,40)	44,54 (8,65)	109	24,04 (11,12)	43,10 (9,93)	<b>796,11</b> ( $< 0,01$ )	0,52 (0,47)	<b>25,05</b> ( $< 0,01$ )	<b>9,15</b> ( $< 0,01$ )	<b>13,32</b> ( $< 0,01$ )	1,62 (0,20)	1,64 (0,20)
Assistée	46	17,65 (9,06)	44,63 (8,19)	48	28,50 (11,14)	48,13 (5,72)	94	23,19 (11,50)	46,41 (7,22)							
Total	109	19,87 (10,37)	43,13 (9,77)	94	28,02 (10,74)	46,37 (7,48)	203	23,65 (11,26)	44,64 (8,91)							



Tableau 2  
Plan d'action

	Méthode	Oui	Non
Avez-vous un plan d'action qui va vous servir à utiliser les documents et les ressources d'information que vous avez obtenus	Autonome ( $n = 108$ )	84	24
	Assistée ( $n = 94$ )	88	6

On retrouve une donnée manquante dans la méthode autonome

été assignés à la méthode assistée, 88 considèrent détenir un plan d'action alors que 6 considèrent ne pas avoir de plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. En ce qui concerne les 108 personnes ayant été assignées à la méthode autonome, 84 considèrent avoir un plan d'action alors que 24 considèrent ne pas avoir de plan d'action. Ainsi, 94 % des participants de la méthode assistée et 78 % des participants de la méthode autonome considèrent avoir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. Un test Khi-2 indique qu'il y a une relation significative ( $\chi^2 = 9,97$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ) entre la méthode assignée (autonome ou assistée) et le fait d'avoir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. En lien avec le premier objectif de l'étude, on peut donc voir que les participants qui ont été assistés par un conseiller sont plus susceptibles d'avoir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. Sur le plan clinique, l'indice phi (0,002) indique que la force de cette relation est de petite taille. En lien, cette fois, avec le deuxième objectif de l'étude, il importe de noter que l'intervention reçue (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi) n'entretient pas de relation significative avec le fait d'avoir un plan d'action.

## Discussion

### Sommaire des résultats

À la lumière des résultats rapportés dans la présente étude, on peut penser que l'utilisation de l'IMT apporte des bénéfices appréciables pour les clients. En effet, on constate une augmentation de grande taille d'effet du score à l'échelle globale laquelle mesure les connaissances relatives à l'IMT, les compétences à utiliser l'IMT ainsi que le niveau de confiance et d'optimisme quant à l'atteinte de ses objectifs de carrière. Il importe de rappeler que l'analyse factorielle réalisée sur le questionnaire à l'étude n'a pas permis de distinguer ces trois catégories. Néanmoins, la présente recherche se distingue par le fait que l'utilisation de l'IMT a été isolée des autres composantes du counseling de carrière non directement liées à l'IMT (p. ex. : questionnaires de connaissance de soi, exploration et clarification des intérêts, valeurs et aptitudes) et qu'un contrôle de la qualité de l'IMT a été assuré par le biais des cartables en matière d'IMT qui ont été remis aux participants pour les aider dans l'atteinte de leurs objectifs de carrière. Ainsi, cette recherche offre un appui à la méta-analyse de Brown et Ryan Krane (2000) selon laquelle l'apport d'information sur le marché du travail est un ingrédient critique aux effets des interventions en dévelop-

pement de carrière.

En lien direct avec le premier objectif de l'étude, les résultats suggèrent que les participants ayant été assistés par un conseiller rapportent une amélioration significativement plus importante sur le plan des connaissances et des compétences en matière d'IMT ainsi qu'un niveau plus élevé d'optimisme et de confiance en vertu de leur score à l'échelle globale. En effet, tel que déjà mentionné, sur le plan clinique cette différence d'amélioration est de taille d'effet moyenne. Le fait que les participants aient été assignés aléatoirement et en alternance à la méthode assistée et à la méthode autonome permet d'appuyer la validité de ce résultat. De plus, ce résultat va également dans le sens de deux méta-analyses en développement de carrière (Brown et Ryan-Krane, 2000; Whiston, Sexton et Lasoff, 1998), lesquelles rapportent des effets de taille moyenne des interventions de carrière en comparaison avec des groupes contrôle ne bénéficiant d'aucune assistance d'un conseiller. Par ailleurs, il est important de souligner, qu'à la différence de ces méta-analyses, les participants n'ayant pas reçu d'assistance dans l'utilisation de l'IMT ont tout de même utilisé des cartables en matière d'IMT. En effet, ils ont été exposés aux mêmes informations, mais il apparaît que l'assistance d'un conseiller apporte une différence significative.





Cette différence d'amélioration entre les personnes de la méthode autonome et celles de la méthode assistée pourrait être expliquée par les composantes inhérentes à la recherche et au traitement de l'information sur le marché du travail nécessaires à la réalisation de son objectif de carrière. Sur le plan de la recherche de l'information, Gottfredsson (1996) affirme que les premières sources d'information consultées sont généralement celles qui sont à proximité de la personne et qui sont les plus facilement abordables. À cet égard, on peut penser que la méthode assistée a permis aux participants d'aborder des sources d'information qu'ils n'auraient pas été portés à utiliser sans l'assistance d'un conseiller. En ce qui concerne le traitement de l'information, plusieurs chercheurs suggèrent que l'individu dispose d'une capacité limitée à traiter une grande quantité d'information (Amir, Gati et Kleiman, 2008; Kleiman et Gati, 2004; Krieshock, Black et McKay, 2009; Sampson, Lenz, Reardon et Peterson, 1999). Selon Gati et Tal (2008), les personnes traitent seulement une partie limitée de l'information, de manière sélective et biaisée et elles éprouvent de la difficulté à relier l'IMT à des caractéristiques personnelles en considérant toute la complexité de l'IMT. À cet égard, bien que les cartables en matière d'IMT fournissent des conseils pour le traitement de l'information, il est possible que l'assistance des conseillers ait davantage facilité le « décryptage » de cette information (Bernaud, Di Fabio et Saint-Denis, 2010). En effet, selon Bernaud, Di Fabio et Saint-Denis (2010), le conseiller peut être vu comme un « traducteur interprète » de l'information. Il peut contribuer à donner du sens aux informations, à les expliquer, à les mettre en perspective et à

les relier de manière personnalisée aux caractéristiques de la personne (Bernaud et al., 2010). Toujours en ce qui concerne le premier objectif de l'étude, on observe que 78 % des participants de la méthode autonome et 94 % des participants de la méthode assistée ont un plan d'action visant à utiliser les documents et les ressources d'information acquises. Si l'on se réfère à Gysbers et al., (2014), le fait d'avoir un plan d'action à l'issue d'une intervention est un bon moyen de permettre aux personnes d'atteindre leurs objectifs de carrière, car il permet de planifier concrètement, en temps réel, les étapes nécessaires à l'atteinte de ces objectifs. Dans cette perspective, étant donné qu'une majorité des participants des deux méthodes rapportent détenir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude, on peut penser que les cartables en matière d'IMT, lesquels comprenaient des suggestions pour élaborer un plan d'action, ont contribué à ce résultat. Néanmoins, on constate tout de même que les participants de la méthode assistée sont plus nombreux à avoir un plan d'action et qui plus est, ils sont moins nombreux à ne pas en avoir un comparativement aux participants de la méthode autonome. Selon Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey et Niles (2009), l'absence de suivi de la part d'un conseiller peut mener à de l'inaction à l'issue d'une intervention auprès de certaines personnes. Dans cette optique, il est possible que l'assistance de la part des conseillers ait contribué à offrir un tel suivi en rappelant aux participants l'importance d'intégrer les informations acquises dans un plan d'action.

En ce qui concerne maintenant le deuxième objectif de l'étude, on ne retrouve pas d'effets différentiels de la méthode (autonome ou assistée) en fonction du besoin de

consultation (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi). Cela amène à penser que l'assistance d'un conseiller est importante pour l'un et l'autre de ces besoins de consultation. On observe néanmoins que les participants de l'intervention en choix de carrière rapportent des bénéfices significativement plus importants que les participants de l'intervention en recherche d'emploi sur le plan du score à l'échelle globale. En effet, tel que déjà mentionné, sur le plan clinique cet effet de l'IMT est considéré comme étant de taille moyenne. Ce résultat pourrait être expliqué par l'importance capitale que prend l'information sur le marché du travail lorsqu'une personne compare différentes alternatives dans un contexte de choix de carrière (Gati et Tal, 2008). Toutefois, on remarque que les participants ayant un besoin d'une intervention en choix de carrière ont enregistré des scores significativement moins élevés au prétest. Ainsi, il est possible que la différence d'amélioration soit due à un phénomène de régression statistique, phénomène découlant de l'erreur de mesure des instruments (Creswell, 2014; Heppner, Kivlighan et Wampold, 2008). Ce phénomène fait en sorte que des groupes de participants ayant des scores plus faibles à un prétest sont susceptibles de rapporter des changements plus importants au cours d'une intervention (Ibid.).

Toujours en ce qui concerne le deuxième objectif de l'étude, les résultats suggèrent qu'il n'y a pas de relation entre l'intervention en choix de carrière et en recherche d'emploi reçue et le fait de disposer d'un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. Cela peut s'expliquer par le fait que la mise en place d'un plan d'action occupait une importance égale autant dans l'intervention en choix de carrière que dans l'intervention en recherche d'emploi.



### Implications pour la pratique

Trois implications pour la pratique en développement de carrière émergent de cette étude, soit l'identification du besoin du client, la nature de l'intervention en IMT et l'autogestion de la carrière (Hiebert, 2012; Savard et Paquette, 2012). On peut penser que d'offrir de l'information spécifique accessible selon le besoin (choix de carrière ou recherche d'emploi) des personnes qui consultent contribue au succès des interventions. En effet, les cartables en matière d'IMT utilisés dans cette étude contenaient des informations pertinentes spécifiquement en lien avec le choix de carrière ou la recherche d'emploi.

Pour ce qui est de la nature de l'intervention, on peut penser que quel que soit la méthode utilisée (autonome ou assistée), on obtient davantage de succès lorsqu'elle permet la combinaison des trois éléments suivants, soit l'identification des ressources d'IMT, la consolidation des listes de ressources IMT en un même endroit facile d'accès et aisé à suivre (les cartables en matière d'IMT) et des suggestions sur la manière de traiter l'information (Hiebert, 2012; Savard et Paquette, 2012).

Au sujet de l'autogestion de la carrière, les résultats de la présente étude suggèrent que les participants peuvent autogérer leur carrière lorsqu'ils ont besoin d'une aide minimale en matière d'IMT. Dans cette perspective, il est possible que les cartables en matière d'IMT produits dans le cadre de cette étude puissent être utilisés auprès de certains clients sans qu'une assistance d'un conseiller ne soit nécessaire. Néanmoins, la présente étude montre qu'une assistance d'un conseiller (deux rencontres de 20 à 30 minutes) conduit à des bénéfices

encore plus importants chez les participants tant sur le plan du score à l'échelle globale que sur le fait d'avoir un plan d'action à l'issue de l'étude. Ainsi, il est possible de penser que la présence de cette assistance permette à certains participants d'obtenir des bénéfices plus appréciables de l'IMT. Toutefois, l'étude ne permet pas d'identifier quels sont les participants qui pourraient bénéficier davantage d'une assistance d'un conseiller.

### Implications pour les futures recherches

À notre connaissance, la présente étude est la première à avoir mis en place un protocole d'intervention visant à isoler l'utilisation de l'IMT des autres composantes du counseling de carrière qui ne sont pas reliés directement à l'IMT. Bien que la présente étude suggère des effets appréciables de l'IMT et que ces effets soient renforcés par l'assistance d'un conseiller, les résultats ne suggèrent pas que toutes les formes d'IMT conduisent à des effets bénéfiques, mais plutôt que l'utilisation d'un outil comme les cartables en matière d'IMT conçus dans la présente étude puisse le faire (Hiebert, 2012; Savard et Paquette, 2012). À cet égard, il apparaît pertinent que d'autres études répliquent le même protocole d'intervention à partir des cartables en matière d'IMT conçus dans cette étude.

Certaines améliorations pourraient être apportées dans les prochaines études. D'abord, il s'avérerait pertinent qu'elles procèdent à la mesure des effets immédiatement après les rencontres. Compte tenu du fait que la présente étude a mesuré les effets de l'utilisation de l'IMT quatre semaines après la fin de l'étude, il est possible que les effets observés ne soient pas attribuables

aux interventions reçues en matière d'IMT.

De plus, les prochaines études pourraient élargir l'étendue de l'intervention à d'autres besoins qui pourraient potentiellement être réponsés par l'IMT : par exemple, pour le maintien en emploi (Hiebert, 2012; Savard et Paquette, 2012). Qui plus est, il serait pertinent de prévoir des protocoles d'intervention contenant plus que deux rencontres de soutien de la part du conseiller. En effet, une méta-analyse de Brown et Ryan Krane (2000) suggère que l'effet des interventions de carrière est optimal lorsque le nombre se situe à quatre ou à cinq rencontres. De cette manière, il serait possible de voir si l'utilisation assistée de l'IMT conduit à des effets ayant davantage de signification sur le plan clinique lorsque les participants bénéficient d'un suivi d'une plus longue durée.

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- 1 Cet article s'appuie sur les données de deux rapports de recherche ayant poursuivi le même objectif. Les données anglophones (Hiebert, 2012) et francophones (Savard et Paquette, 2012) ont été fusionnées afin d'augmenter la puissance des analyses statistiques et d'en dégager des résultats plus étoffés.
- 2 Exemple d'item: Je connais l'existence de documents papier ou sur Internet susceptible de m'aider à trouver mes options de carrière/emploi.
- 3 Exemple d'item: Je suis capable de trouver les informations susceptible de m'aider à me rapprocher de l'objectif que j'ai fixé pour ma carrière/mon emploi.
- 4 Exemple d'item : Je suis optimiste face à l'avenir, confiant que je vais atteindre mon objectif de carrière.



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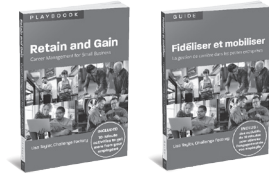
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# The Influence of ‘Prompting for Value Ranking’ on Career Choices of Youth in the Gulf Arab World

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## Abstract

The unequal distribution of qualified youth in different career disciplines is regarded by research as one of the main reasons for the severe labour market gaps as well as a shortage of opportunities for youth specialized in career disciplines with an exceeding labour supply for the labour demand. Recent studies show that a lack of synchronization of attribute values sought after and career choices, results in youth in the Gulf Arab world choosing career disciplines that are usually not in line with labour market opportunities that would satisfy those sought after attribute values. This study explored the influence of ‘prompting for value-ranking’ (i.e. prioritizing the importance of attribute values) on career choices of the youth in the Gulf Arab world. This intervention was tested using the following criteria enabling career decisions that would bring about better choice outcomes and higher decision quality, in terms of satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit of career choice with the decision maker’s preferences. Contrary to predictions based on existing research in the United States and Europe, career choices of Arab youth are likely to satisfy sought attribute values that were chosen when not prompted to rank values prior to making the decision, compared to those choices when prompted. The study’s findings indicated that Arab youth adopted heuristics theorized in Western decision science literature, together with indicators of the need

for customizing behavioural interventions for the Gulf Arab context.

While the Middle East faces the highest youth unemployment rate in the world at 25% (Kapsos & Sparrebom, 2011), recent research in the Arab world has been conducted to identify the possible causal factors for this increased youth unemployment (e.g. IFC, 2011; Abdul latif, Hamza, Rizk, Bizri, & Salama (2009); Tamkeen, 2010). This unemployment factor is also a result of the labour market gaps in certain fields (e.g. healthcare, hospitality, customer service) and a shortage of opportunities for youth in other fields, due to an exceeding labour supply (e.g. business and management, administration, accountancy); where one important causal factor identified in the research is the unequal distribution of qualified youth in different fields and areas. In addition, youth in the Arab world are found to show little recognition of the need for synchronizing career choices with values sought after in their career. Consequently, the majority of youth in the Arab world surveyed in a recent report indicated that if they could ‘go back in time’ to make their career path decisions again, they would make a different choice (IFC, 2011).

In designing interventions to enable decisions yielding more optimal results and higher satisfaction, research on consumer behaviour and decision processes has found that prompting respondents to rank their values prior to making their decisions

could bring about positive results.

This study aims to test whether the former ‘prompting for value-ranking’ would encourage youth to make better career choices. To elaborate, this study seeks to test whether prompting youth in the Gulf Arab world to rank attribute values that need to be considered in their career choices, prior to making their career choices would influence those choices they then consequently make. This is in terms of whether more career disciplines with labour demand are chosen and whether better decisions, with regards to post-choice satisfaction, confidence and fit with preferences, are made, compared to when these individuals were not prompted for ‘value-ranking’.

Presumably, with the integration of the attribute value ranking option prior to the decision making process, there is an increased likelihood that more youth in the Arab world would be satisfied with their decisions made (Chernev, 2003). In addition to individual implications on decision making processes, the consideration of values in career choices could potentially bring about broader policy implications for both the public and private sector. Given this, it is likely that more participants would recognize the satisfaction brought about by the presence of attribute values associated with otherwise disregarded career disciplines available. Hypothetically, this may also prompt youth to rank their values so that an increased percentage of youth in the Arab world would choose (or at least consider) career paths in disciplines



whether there is a labour supply need.

To elaborate on the above, 'prompting for value-ranking' is an example of a proposed behavioral intervention that attempts to 'nudge' or in other words, set up the right 'choice architecture' and influential social environment, so that decisions yielding the best results for the decision makers are made, and the more rational alternatives are chosen (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). In their analysis of human behaviour, Kahneman & Tversky (1973) proposed that the decision making processes that we as humans tend to use (for career choices, every day matters, etc) are all usually an attempt to find our 'easy way out' of our decision problems. Whether it is be through choosing the 'best' amongst alternatives in alternative-focused thinking (Keeney, 1992), i.e. evaluating options until reaching the most satisfying option through 'satisficing' (Simon, 1978), or through making decisions based on one or certain number of aspects through 'lay rationalism' (Hsee, Zhang, Yu & Xi (2003), heuristics are used by people to entail low mental costs and less time (Keeney, 1992). The problem that naturally arises from such behavioral tendencies is that humans are not always able to make choices that would yield happiness or optimal consequential experiences (Hsee & Hastie, 2006). There are yet to be findings on optimal strategies for avoiding biases leading to sub-optimal decisions, or the tendency to adopt heuristic that do not yield 'happiness'. However, value-focused thinking has been proposed as an undermining approach for establishing guidelines in decision-making, whether through referring to personal past experiences or existing information available (Keeney, 1992).

One of the prompting for value-ranking approaches hypothesized and applied in literature is prompting decision makers to articulate their ideal attributes in a certain decision context. This intervention has been designed so that decision makers rank attributes associated with a certain decision in order of importance before going on to make choices (Chernev, 2003); a process through which respondents are reminded to consider attribute values to consider when making their consequent decisions.

Simultaneously, the prompting for value-ranking has been found to enable decision makers to formulate a mental articulation of their 'ideal point'. The ideal point is a 'combination of attributes and attribute values describing the ideal choice option for the decision maker' that would guide the decision maker to make a more informed decision (Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1989). In line with evidence from recent consumer research in various decision contexts such as that of buying a sofa, choosing a laptop, (Chernev, 2001, 2003; Klayman & Ha, 1987; Russo, Meloy & Medvec, 1998) the results of this research determined that allowing for ideal point availability would also increase the likeliness of decisions with higher reported rates of satisfaction and lower rates of regret (Chernev, 2003). While this intervention allows for a decision making process that first prompts for decision makers to think through what they want out of the choice, the importance of considering values when making career choices in determining how informed a decision is when made has been highlighted by literature in the US and Europe. This is in terms of allowing for value-focused thinking and encouraging decision makers to clarify the

relevant factors for assessing their career choices – a stage usually overlooked when mental shortcuts are adopted to reach decisions (Keeney, 1992; Wooler, 1982). This has sparked an interest in developing decision aids that raise the decision maker's awareness of these values during the decision making process (Wooler, 1982).

At the same time, research on youth career choices in the Arab world has highlighted the role played by the failure to meet Arab youth values in determining post-choice satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Moreover, ranking the opportunity to contribute to their countries as one of the top values sought after in a career by Gulf Arab youth suggests that an awareness of these values during the decision making process may encourage youth to consider options for which labour supply is lacking, that may be otherwise overlooked (IFC, 2011).

In terms of values within the domain of job opportunities, youth in the Arab world have ranked the following values with respect to career and the respective post-secondary educational choices in order of importance:

1. Job satisfaction
2. Good pay and opportunities for personal development
3. Broader contribution of ideal employer
4. Opportunity to work with talented people
5. Opportunity to contribute to development of my country (Asdaa, 2009; Little, 2010).

However, given that there is little recognition for the need for synchronizing career and relevant post-secondary choices with the former values sought after in their career, prompting for value rank-



ing could be tested as a behavioral decision aid that would establish a mental link between values sought after and career choices for youth in the Gulf Arab world - or at least an awareness of such a link (Wooler, 1982).

The need for such awareness of career and post-secondary choices would be applicable for both Arab youth and institutions in the Arab world. Despite research in the Arab world identifying the need for attribute values to be incorporated in such decision making processes, except for Bahrain there ironically exists no substantial available data published on labour market gaps and needs in the Arab world (Schwalje, 2009; Tamkeen, 2010). In addition to Schwalje's published attempts to identify such existing research, the author's experience in trying to reach organizations and foundations in the Arab world working to reduce youth unemployment were all in vain. Whether 'prompting for value-ranking' would allow for this awareness it could also provide an indication on whether 'nudges' or such behavioral interventions that attempt to encourage decision makers to make a certain choice, are applicable and effective in the Arab world. While behavioral interventions for better decisions have been found to be effective in Western societies (e.g. Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Lenton, Fasolo & Todd, 2008, Volpp et al., 2008; Johnson and Goldstein, 2003; Kluger & DeNisi, 1998), including those involving the influence of values (e.g. Wooler, 1982; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987), it is yet to be proven whether this is the same in other cultures such as that of the Gulf Arab region. Considering that literature has found considerable differences in decision making processes between Western and Eastern cultures (or individualistic and

collectivistic cultures), this study's results would shed more light upon effectiveness of behavioral interventions similar to 'prompting for value ranking' in such decision making processes (Radford, Mann, Ohta & Nakane, 1993).

Given the proven significance of articulated attribute values in improving career choices (Wooler, 1982, Arvai, Gregory, & Mc-Daniels, (2001).; Miller & McGee, 2005), there are a number of predictions at this stage. The first is that 'prompting for value ranking' would motivate a higher number of youth in the study's sample to choose career disciplines characterized as labour market gaps. This prediction is built on the assumption that more youth are likely to recognize higher probability of satisfying sought after attribute values associated with such career disciplines (e.g. more opportunities in the labour market, higher labour demand, higher contribution to country's national development). The second prediction hypothesized is that 'prompting for value-ranking' would lead to an increase of the three variables tested (i.e. post-choice satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit with preferences), when compared to decisions made by youth in the Gulf Arab world who have not been prompted to rank attribute values.

In his study, Chernev (2008) found decision makers who were prompted to rank their values to have 'stronger preferences' for their chosen option, having articulated an ideal point to choose, therefore leading to post-choice confidence in their decisions and lower regret/dissatisfaction. To elaborate, the difference between Respondent A who had been prompted to rank attribute values and Respondent B, who had not been, is the dispersion of their attribute level preferences. Both

respondents would have mentally articulated attribute value preferences, even if vaguely, to be able to make a decision. However, Respondent B would trade off the different levels of each attribute, whereas Respondent A would have already articulated attribute trade-offs, prior to making the actual decision. Additionally, Respondent A would have a more comprehensive preference structure since he/she has articulated their preferences for each level. On the other hand, Respondent B would have a more selective preference structure in which only the top levels of each attribute would have been articulated. The stronger preferences and therefore choices made with greater confidence in the case of respondent A is predicted to lead to higher decision quality, at least in terms of subjective measures (Chernev, 2008). Figure 1 provides a brief illustration of the prediction explained. In adapting this prediction to the scope of this study, confidence, satisfaction as well as perceived fit of the chosen option with decision maker preferences that have a significant correlation with overall decision quality, are included in hypothesizing decision quality of choices made when prompted for value-ranking for career choices and relevant post-secondary choices (Aksoy, Cooil & Lurie, 2011).

## Method

### Design

A one way randomized groups design was employed where two groups of participants were presented with a choice set of various career disciplines to choose as their future career path and educational program choice. One of these groups of participants were 'prompted to rank attribute values' by ranking the level of importance

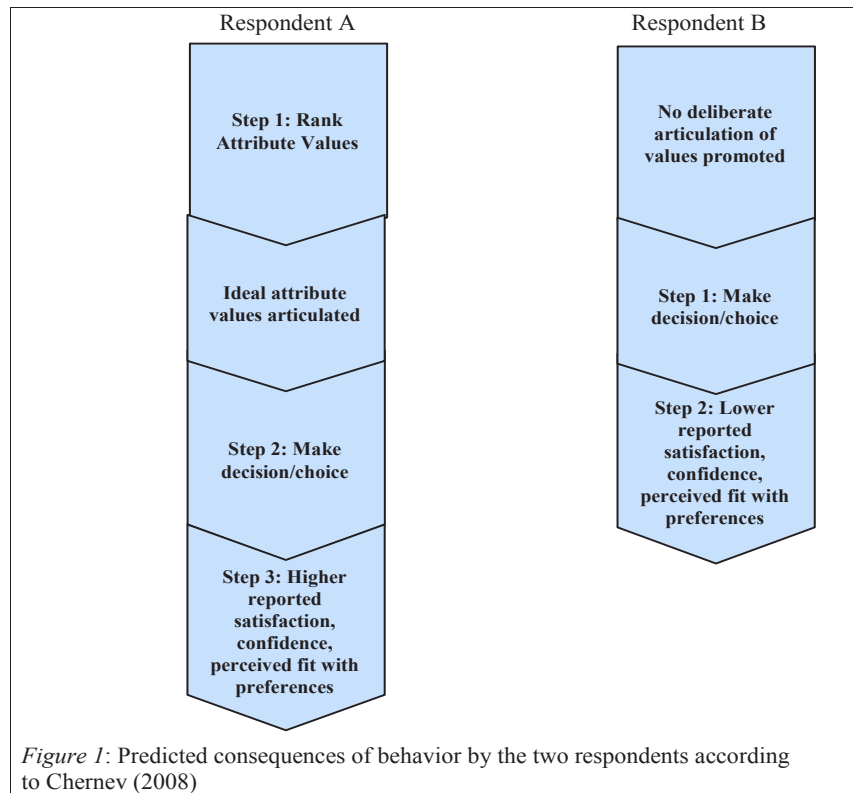




they hold for each attribute value, before making their career decision. The other group started by directly choosing their desired career path discipline. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate how these conditions allow the research questions to be answered. The category of the career choice made (whether labour market gap or not), post-choice satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit with preferences were the dependent variables.

### Participants

Participants ranged from high school students in their final year to university graduates. Participants needed to satisfy three conditions: (1) the participant had to be living in a Gulf Arab country (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates), (2) the participant had to fall within the age range of 16 to 25 years and (3) the participant was required to complete measures assessing the variables being studied. This uneven gender representation could possibly impact the results with respect to career choices and respective post-secondary choices especially in jobs that are traditionally more predominantly female or male dominated. Of the 107 participating youth, 90 met the above inclusion criteria. Participants averaged 21.5 years of age, the majority of participants were female (80%) and were mainly based in the United Arab Emirates (87%), as well as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. More than half of participating youth were currently studying in university (60%), one third (30%) were graduates of either university or high school and were currently working, 11% were both graduates and job seekers, and the rest in their final years of high school.



### Materials

The questionnaire presented online via LSE Qualtrics was used as the data collection tool. LSE Qualtrics is a research-specific software used for quantitative surveying in academic research at the London School of Economics (LSE). The author conducted all surveys and provided participants with a letter reiterating the purpose, confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary nature of the study.

### Procedure and Stimuli

Participants of group A were first presented with a list of attribute values that were randomly ordered for each participant by the Qualtrics software, for which participants were required to rate the level of importance on a scale from 1 to 10 (1=least important, 10=most important) he/she held for each of the values in terms of influencing her career choice.

In line with prevalent stimuli presented to youth in the Gulf Arab world when choosing university degree programs or future career paths, options for the participant's choice of future career path were then listed (and randomized by Qualtrics for each participant) all together in one column on one display page. For group B, this page was the first page they were presented with.

Participants of both groups were then asked to rate their satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit of the choice made with their preferences on a scale from 1 to 10, with each of the respective three measures on separate display pages with the key measure in italics to avoid confusion or perceived repetition of any of three similarly framed questions.



Table 1

Condition Description

Career Choice Condition (IV)	Condition Description	
	Stimuli Present	Consecutive Variables Measured
A	Attribute Values Ranking and (followed by career disciplines options list	Subjective measures of decisions quality(satisfaction, confidence, perceived fit with preferences)
B	Career disciplines options list only	Subjective measures of decisions quality (satisfaction, confidence, perceived fit with preferences)

Table 2

Research Sub-questions and their Relation to Conditions

	Research Sub-question	Between Group Comparisons of Mean Response Times Required for:
Q1	Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase the likeliness of a labor market gap being chosen?	Number of labor market gaps chosen
Q2	Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice satisfaction with the decision made?	Number of choices after which above 5 (out of 10) level of satisfaction rated
Q3	Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice confidence with the decision made?	Number of choices after which above 5 (out of 10) level of confidence rated
Q4	Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice perceived fit of the career discipline just chosen with decision maker preferences?	Number of choices after which above 5 (out of 10) level of perceived fit of choice made with preferences rated

Measures

**Articulation of ‘ideal attribute values’.** The attribute values listed for participants of group A to rate are listed in Table 3 along with their relation to attribute values identified as most important to youth in the Arab world when pursuing a career (Asdaa,2009).

Two attribute values were listed in the survey in relation to the opportunity to contribute to the development of one’s country considering that emphasizing it is likely to encourage youth to fill labour market gaps (IFC, 2011). Participants were asked to assume that they were in the process of choosing

their future career path and to rate the importance they hold for each of the attributes when choosing their future career path. However, it was expected that this assumption may have an effect on survey responses of participant samples that had already completed post-secondary education, because they may have already made their career choices.

**Career path choice.** To allow for testing the first prediction, an equal number of disciplines witnessing a shortage of labour supply for demand and career disciplines witnessing a labour supply exceeding labour demand were required/ presented in the list. However, due

to the absence of substantial data on regional labour market gaps in the Gulf Arab region, the author improvised for this with the use of data on expatriate substitution required to fill certain disciplines to indicate the need for more local labour supply for those disciplines (Schwalje, 2009). Table 4 elaborates on this list. This improvisation may have affected survey responses and in an ideal situation, available substantial data may have provided more reliable survey responses.

The list therefore included eight disciplines that require expatriate substitution (i.e. fields that require filling labour demand with expatriate workforces, due to the



Table 3

Attribute values in survey’s stimuli and their relation to research findings

	Attribute Value Listed in Survey Stimuli	Values of Arab Youth in Terms of Pursuing Careers (Asdaa, 2009)
1	Rate of pay	Good pay
2	Job Satisfaction	Job satisfaction
3	Level of demand in labor market	Opportunity to contribute to development of my Country
4	Opportunity to contribute to my country’s development	Opportunity to contribute to development of my country and broader contribution of ideal employer
5	Opportunities for personal development	Opportunities for personal development and opportunity to work with talented people.

Note: The attribute values listed for participants of group A (the experimental group) to rate in order of importance are listed in Table 3 along with their relation to attribute values identified as most important to youth in the Arab world when pursuing a career (Asdaa, 2009).

absence of local talent and skilled labour) and eight career disciplines that do not (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011). The names of each career discipline were slightly modified with the help of leading recruitment agencies (Bayt.com, 2010), to suit labels that were more familiar to the Gulf Arab world. Participants were asked to assume that they were deciding on their future career path and then to choose the career discipline that described their chosen future path most accurately.

**Decision Quality (in terms of Satisfaction, Confidence and Perceived fit with Preferences).**

These three measures were chosen to assess decision quality given their relevance with regards to the limited scope of the study, given that the particular attribute values of each career discipline are not known here and specific individual decision maker preferences are not elicited (Aksoy et al., 2011; Clemen, 2008).

**Control Variables.** To control for differences in prevalent choice stimuli for choosing career paths and differences in education and professional settings, youth from only Gulf Arab countries (where choice stimuli and environments are similar) as opposed to

all Arab countries were included in the study (Schwalje, 2009; Baldwin-Edwards, 2011). Additionally, to control for variance in results due to significant age differences, only participants between the ages of 16 and 25 were included.

To ensure that the effect of prompting for value-ranking was tested, a group of the participants was selected as a control group. These participants were asked to answer the same survey as the rest of the participant sample, but without being prompted to rank their values.

**Results**

The results and raw scores for dependent and independent variables for both groups of participants are presented in Tables 5 to 8. Of particular interest, the greatest difference between the two groups’ means is with the number of career disciplines chosen that happen to be labour market gaps, indicating a greater difference in the first dependent variable than the three others. To better understand the variance in results between the presence and absence of our behavioral intervention, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the recommendation of Lewis-Beck (1993) was conducted.

**Q 1 –** Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase the likelihood of the labour market gap being chosen?

Responses indicated significant differences between the experimental effect (group A) and the control group (group B) with regards to the number of career disciplines chosen witnessing a shortage in labour supply for demand. On the contrary, a less number of participants chose career disciplines witnessing a labour demand when prompted

to rank attribute values than when not. Given this, the first prediction appears to not be true

**Q 2 –** Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice satisfaction with the decision made?

Respondents’ perceptions of satisfaction above 5 on the scale from 1 to 10 indicate insignificant differences between experimental effect group (group A) and control group (group B).

**Q3 -** Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice confidence with the decision made?

Respondents’ perceptions of satisfaction above 5 on the scale from 1 to 10 indicate insignificant differences between experimental effect group (group A) and control group (group B).

**Q4 –** Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice perceived fit of the career discipline chosen with the decision maker’s preferences?

Respondents’ perceptions of satisfaction above 5 on the scale



Table 4

Deconstruction of list of career disciplines according to labor market demand in the Gulf Arab countries (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011).

	Career Discipline Listed	State of Discipline in the Gulf Labor Market
1	Law and legal services	Relatively higher labor supply
2	Healthcare: doctor	Labor market gap
3	Healthcare: nurse	Labor market gap
4	Healthcare: pharmacist	Labor market gap
5	Business and management	Relatively higher labor supply
6	Human resources	Relatively higher labor supply
7	Administration	Relatively higher labor supply
8	Electromechanical engineering	Relatively higher labor supply
9	Accountancy and finance	Relatively higher labor supply
10	Structural/civil engineering and architecture	Labor market gap
11	Hotel management and hospitality	Labor market gap
12	Information technology (IT)	Labor market gap
13	Education and training	Labor market gap
14	Art and design	Labor market gap
15	Public administration and defense	Relatively higher labor supply
16	Customer service	Labor market gap

from 1 to 10 indicate insignificant differences between experimental effect group (group A) and control group (group B).

### Discussion and Implications

The goal of this study was to examine the influence of prompting participants to rank their values on career choices in the Gulf Arab world, in terms of the choices made themselves as well as subjective measures of decision quality. Significant prior research has shown the positive effects of behavioral interventions on decisions made by youth who are considering career and relevant post-secondary choices in the United States and Europe, and therefore broadly speaking (e.g. Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Marteau, Ashcroft, & Oliver, 2009; Johnson & Goldstein, 2003; Kluger & DeNisi, 1998, etc.), this study also aimed to build on such empirical research and investigate how different the Gulf Arab world is in the applicability of behavioral interventions and decisions aids

such as this. Using a sample size of 90 participants from different Gulf Arab countries, this study attempted to test the influence of prompting for value- ranking on career choices through the functions of two variables: (1) its effect on the number of labour market gaps chosen by youth in the Gulf Arab world. It was assumed that if participants had been influenced by the importance ranking of their values, they would have been more likely to recognize the need to consider labour market gaps. (2) The quality of the decision, in terms of satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit with preferences. While there are obviously other factors that may influence these variables, this study is a crucial step in specifying the behavioral interventions that may influence those decision contexts for youth in the Gulf Arab world.

**Q 1** – Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase the likeliness of the labour market gap being chosen?

The first objective of this

study was to determine whether prompting youth in the Gulf Arab world to rank attribute values before a career choice would increase the likeliness for career disciplines, characterized by being labour market gaps, to be chosen. In contrast to predictions, the most compelling finding is that youth in the Gulf Arab world are more likely to stick to more commonly chosen career disciplines than those with higher labour demands, when prompted to rank attribute values, compared to when not prompted to do so. Prompting for value ranking seems to have influenced decisions taken by youth surveyed in the Gulf Arab world, through decreasing their likeliness to choose labour market gaps. These labour market gaps are typically not prevalent chosen in the Gulf Arab world.

This reverse influence of the 'prompting for value' intervention on career choices re-emphasizes how foreign youth in the Gulf Arab world are to considering values when making career choices. From a practical perspective, the low



Table 5

Results of labor market gaps chosen as career path choices

Career Discipline	Scores (number of choices)	
	Group A	Group B
1 Education and Training	1	5
2 Healthcare: Doctor	2	7
3 Healthcare: Nurse	0	0
4 Healthcare: Pharmacist	0	0
5 Art and Design	1	1
6 Information Technology (IT)	4	1
7 Hotel Management	0	1
8 Structural/Civil Engineering and Architecture	2	2

Table 8

Results of perceived fit of choice made with preferences ratings

Rating (1/10)	Scores (number of participants)	
	Group A	Group B
1	0	0
2	1	1
3	0	0
4	2	1
5	4	3
6	5	3
7	10	8
8	10	14
9	5	7
10	8	7

Table 6

Results of post-choice satisfaction ratings

Rating (1/10)	Scores (Number of participants)	
	Group A	Group B
1	0	0
2	0	1
3	1	0
4	2	1
5	3	2
6	3	6
7	14	10
8	8	11
9	6	5
10	8	9

Table 7

Results of post-choice confidence ratings

Rating (1/10)	Scores	
	Group A	Group B
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	1
4	1	1
5	6	5
6	7	7
7	6	7
8	8	13
9	12	7
10	4	4

availability of information on labour market gaps and disciplines with higher labour demand suggests that a low awareness of career disciplines that would satisfy sought after attribute values such as contribution to national development, rate of pay and addressing demands in the labour market is prevalent.

In the author's view, the present findings do not necessarily suggest a complete disregard of value consideration in career decisions usually made by youth in the Gulf Arab world. However, it does shed light upon on the fact that even when taking attribute values into account, youth in the Gulf Arab world could still be misinformed on which career disciplines satisfy

those attribute values. This could be potentially leading to a higher adherence to career options that are prevalently chosen in the Gulf Arab world, primarily due to high social regard and reputation (Al Omran, 2012). Addressing the lack of research and statistical information on labour market gaps and attribute values and features of career disciplines with labour demands are critical for youth in the Gulf Arab world to make more informed career choices that would benefit the labour market (IFC, 2011). Moreover, the effect of myths that some occupations are 'better' or 'inferior' seem to be overriding an interest or consideration of labour market gaps and labour demands of certain disci-

plines. Therefore, despite the need for better information on labour market gaps in the Gulf Arab region, the power of word of mouth in shaping reputations of career disciplines in Arab societies could potentially override the influence of prompting for value ranking even with higher availability of information in the Arab world (Yousef, 2004; IFC, 2011). The influence that word of mouth on career choices of youth in the Gulf Arab world can be further explored and studied to provide a clearer view of the factors affecting their career choices.

**Q 2** – Does being prompted for value ranking before making a career choice increase post-choice



satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit of the decision with decision maker preferences?

While the reverse effect of the prompting behavioral intervention may be a result of the above mentioned fact of low information on attribute values of different career disciplines, particularly those that are characterized by being labour market gaps, the indifference in subjective measures of decision quality (satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit with preferences) may actually be a potential indicator of the inapplicability of behavioral interventions or 'nudges' in the Gulf Arab world.

It would be fair to assume that even if the reverse effect of prompting for value-ranking was caused by low information on attribute values of career disciplines, there would still be a difference in satisfaction, confidence and perceived fit with preferences; in this case, perhaps lower scores for the mentioned three variables for the group making their career choices after ranking their sought after attribute values, due to being uncertain on whether their decisions would satisfy their sought after attribute values or not. This assumption is based on the tendency of humans to be loss averse when facing the uncertain (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). On the other hand, it is logical to assume that these subjective measures of decision quality would have been higher for this same group if participants truly believed that their choice of career disciplines that are prevalently chosen in the Gulf Arab world would satisfy the level of attribute values they are seeking in their career paths. However, the results that oppose these assumptions could be due to participants being unaccustomed to considering values when making a career deci-

sion as previous research in the Arab world has shown (IFC, 2011). Here, the need for further research into behavioral interventions and measures that would be of higher effectiveness, familiarity and meaning to youth in the Arab world is evident. Additionally, the need for the Arab world to customize and develop behavioral interventions to suit their own contexts and cultures is important to determine effectiveness of measures, rather than immediate use of interventions suggested in US and Europe literature, as research in other cultures such as Japan and India have also shown (Mann, Radford & Kanagawa, 1985; Radford et al., 1993; Tipandjan, 2010).

Despite establishing the need for measures to be customized to the Gulf Arab world, this study does highlight behaviour that may indicate common similarities to heuristics and mental shortcuts theorized and found in Western literature. For instance, the discovered reverse effect of the prompting for value ranking intervention, points at several heuristics that could have been adopted by participants. When uncertain of whether prioritized values were satisfied by career disciplines with labour demands, participants adhered to familiar career disciplines and were salient to what seemed unfamiliar. This served as a mental shortcut to narrow down options of career disciplines in the presented list. In other words, participants seemed to 'satisfice' or choose the alternative that seemed familiar to them due to low information (Simon, 1978). Additionally, with the pressure of increased perceived accountability associated with the decision-making, people are more likely to look to be perceived as rational to their societies; to adjust their beliefs rather than their behaviors to maintain

this, therefore choosing usually chosen career disciplines rather than taking the risk of choosing career disciplines that could potentially satisfy attribute values, but would be unfamiliar to the Gulf Arab world (Dolan, Hallsworth, Halpern, King, & Vlaev (2010).

The recognition of the significance of cultural context of behavioral interventions is hardly new as cited above, but this study emphasizes this fact, taken together, with the need for referring to literature in the United States and Europe literature to build on similarities in behavioral decision making. The findings of this study, however, primarily address a more critical issue than the importance of context; the ineffectiveness of such behavioral interventions due to an absence of consideration of values and solid information in career choices of youth in the Gulf Arab world.

While several control variables were integrated and stimuli lists were randomized to reduce potential biases, there is a chance that prior experiences, pre-determined decisions relating to participants' career paths may have produced a bias toward the chosen career disciplines and results. Another limitation of the results of this study with regards to influence of prompting for value-ranking on career choices is the fact that other influential factors in Arab countries for which very limited control is possible could have overridden effects caused by the prompting for value ranking intervention. The factors are such as those associated with Arab countries being part of a collectivist culture; holding more value to influence of others in community and society (Stewart, 1986; Mann et al., 1985; Radford et al., 1993; Tipandjan, 2010).



Moreover, the nature of the study's method of research may have posed an additional limitation that future researchers should be aware of. Being a cross-sectional study, the survey results used to reach the study's conclusions face a potential threat to its internal validity, where causality between variables to identify causes and effects, is hard to identify (Brutus and Duniewicz, 2012). A longitudinal study in the future with a greater sample size would perhaps confirm results and guarantee a higher statistical validity. Given the small sample size, these results should be regarded as preliminary but used as a foundation for future interventions to improve career decision quality in the Gulf Arab world. Furthermore, despite efforts in compensating for the absence of solid information on career choices and their attribute values, it is worth noting that this lack of substantial data may have posed an additional challenge for the reliability of both the experimental design as well as participants' responses. Having said this, it is important that statistical information and data be improved and accessible in the Arab world to enable substantial studies to be conducted in the future.

### Conclusion

To summarize, the results presented in this study provide a test of a behavioral intervention for the consideration of values in career choices as postulated by literature on the role of ideal point availability and value-focused thinking in determining better decision making. The results provide significant support for research claiming differences in the mechanisms of influence of behavioral interventions in decisions contexts in different cultures and

countries, and, at the same time, points to potential indicators of similarities in heuristics and mental shortcuts adopted by people. The validity of the reverse effects of 'prompting for value ranking' is very likely to be context-rich and not necessarily generalizable to Gulf Arab youth at future points in time due to the possibility of determining factors being associated with the current state of data availability and awareness of attribute values.

On the other hand, this context-rich nature of results highlights a consideration not emphasized enough in literature world – that is, the potential fluctuation of the effectiveness of certain 'nudges' or behavioral interventions. This is because use of behavioral interventions assumes that decision makers have a certain degree of knowledge or awareness that would enable decision makers to 'determine/select' the best choice outcome. In the case of interventions where this awareness or knowledge is absent, behavioral interventions may not always be as effective (Fasolo and Bonini, 2010). Given evidence here, the Gulf Arab world should primarily focus on better information and awareness of prerequisite conditions (i.e. attribute values of career disciplines and labour market gaps) before applying further interventions for better career decisions.

Table 4: Deconstruction of list of career disciplines according to labour market demand in the Gulf Arab countries (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011).

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# Project Partnership Funding Available Financement de projet en partenariat



CERIC is currently accepting partnership proposals to develop innovative resources for counselling and career development.

We invite both individuals and organizations (e.g. education, community-based, non-profit, private, etc.) to submit project proposals for career counselling-related research or learning and professional development.

The following **Practical & Academic Research** priority areas have been identified:

- Career practising with social impact
- Early intervention to assist children's career decision-making
- Evaluation: Impact of policy and programs on career services

The following **Professional Development & Ongoing Learning** priority areas have been identified:

- New emerging career development theories and career management models
- Impact of social media on how career practitioners are doing their work
- Entrepreneurial education and career development
- Intersection of diversity and inclusion at work

For more information or to complete a Letter of Intent Application, please visit [ceric.ca](http://ceric.ca).

Le CERIC accepte présentement les soumissions de proposition de développement de ressources novatrices pour le counseling et le développement de carrière.

Nous invitons les particuliers et les organismes (par exemple, éducatifs, communautaires, à but non lucratif, privés, etc.) à soumettre des propositions de projets de recherche ou d'apprentissage et développement professionnel dans le domaine de l'orientation.

Nous avons identifié les domaines prioritaires suivants en matière de **recherche appliquée et universitaire** :

- Pratique de carrière avec un impact social
- Intervention en bas âge pour faciliter la prise de décision chez les enfants
- Évaluation de l'impact des politiques et des programmes sur les services d'orientation

Nous avons identifié les domaines prioritaires suivants liés au **perfectionnement professionnel et à la formation continue** :

- Théories émergentes dans le domaine de l'orientation professionnelle et modèles de gestion de carrière
- Impact des médias sociaux sur le travail des professionnels de l'orientation
- Enseignement de l'esprit d'entreprise et développement de carrière
- Intersection de la diversité et de l'inclusion au travail

Pour plus d'information ou pour remplir un formulaire de lettre d'intention, visitez [ceric.ca](http://ceric.ca).

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## Etta St. John Wileman Award Winner Interview

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C'est avec grand honneur que la rédaction de la Revue canadienne de développement de carrière vous présente une série d'entrevues avec d'anciens lauréats du prix Etta St. John Wileman. Le prix Etta St. John Wileman qui récompense l'ensemble des réalisations dans le développement de carrière a été conçu pour reconnaître et célébrer les personnes qui ont consacré leurs vies à leurs professions ; consacré leurs vies à l'amélioration de la pratique de développement de carrière, de l'administration, de la recherche et de l'éducation ; et incarnent les rôles de chercheur, éducateur, auteur, praticien, et de leader dans le domaine de la carrière.

Ces individus ont tous contribué à leur façon à l'identité de la profession du développement de carrière au Canada. C'est grâce à ces entrevues que nos lecteurs auront l'occasion de voir différentes perspectives, et peut-être trouver un peu d'inspiration pour leur propre travail et leur développement de carrière.

It is with great honour that the editors of *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* bring you a special series of interviews with past Etta St. John Wileman award winners. The Etta St. John Wileman Award for Lifetime Achievement in Career Development is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who have devoted their lives within their professions; devoted their lives to the enhancement of career development practice, administration, research and education; and personify the role of researcher, educator, author, practitioner, and career leader.

These individuals have all contributed in their own way to the identity of the career development profession in Canada. It is through these interviews that our readers will get to see different perspectives, and perhaps gather some inspiration for their own work and career development.



### Denis Pelletier

Award Winner  
2009

Denis Pelletier, Ph.D. est un professeur à la retraite (1966-1996) de la Faculté des Sciences de l'éducation à l'Université Laval, Québec. En 1982, il co-fonde Septembre éditeur, qui est un éditeur spécialisé dans le domaine de l'éducation

et de la carrière. En 2006, il reçoit le prestigieux titre de membre émérite de l'Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation et des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec (OCCOPPQ)". En 2009, il gagne le prix Etta St. John

Wileman du CERIC pour son travail en faveur du développement de carrière, de travail et d'environnement de travail au Canada. Denis Pelletier est également le coauteur de l'ADVP (activation approche de développement vocationnel et per-



sonnel) qui est reconnu à l'échelle internationale.

Denis Pelletier, Ph.D. is a retired professor (1966-1996) from the Faculty of Education Sciences at Laval University, Quebec. In 1982, he co-founded Septembre éditeur, which is a publisher specializing in the field of career and education. In 2006, he received the prestigious title of emeritus member of the "Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation et des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec (OCCOPPQ)". In 2009, he won the Etta St. John Wileman Award from CERIC for his work in championing career, work, and workplace development in Canada. Denis Pelletier is also the joint author of ADVP approach (activation de développement vocationnel et personnel) which is recognized on an international scale.

~

*Réimprimé avec l'autorisation du CERIC. Entrevue d'origine réalisée pour OrientAction le 14 décembre 2015./ Re-printed by permission from CERIC. Original interview conducted for ContactPoint on Dec 14, 2015.*

**Selon vous, quel a été le principal changement important dans le domaine de carrière au cours des 10 dernières années?/ What do you see as the major significant change in the career field in the past 10 years?**

**Denis:** *Connaissance de soi et expérimentation de soi*

La propension à s'investir dans l'expérience semble la caractéristique des jeunes d'aujourd'hui. L'idée, pour eux, d'apprendre en faisant, d'expérimenter

plutôt que d'explorer d'une manière seulement idéative, nous fait voir la nécessité d'une orientation agissante.

J'essaie, pour ma part, depuis quelques années, de comprendre ce que pourrait être une orientation agissante. Mon objet de réflexion fut d'abord celui du sentiment d'efficacité personnelle (Bandura). Il procède, dans l'adolescence et au long de la vie, de ce qui est réussi, accompli comme réalisation, des défis qu'on a relevés, des encouragements faits par les autres, des résultats qu'on a obtenus et du mérite qu'on s'attribue, de l'aisance devant les tâches à faire, de la gestion du stress dans le cours de l'action. Bref, la connaissance de soi devient expérimentation de soi et sentiment de sa compétence, optimisme face au futur. Comprenons que l'analyse des traits et facteurs, des intérêts et des aptitudes ont leur importance, mais rien ne vaut l'expérimentation de soi comme moyen de les valider et de clarifier ce que l'on veut devenir. C'est pourquoi devraient être introduites, dans le milieu scolaire, une culture de la réussite et de la compétence ainsi qu'une pratique de l'exploration des carrières davantage axée sur le coaching et sur l'encadrement des défis et des apprentissages à réaliser en rapport à la découverte du monde du travail.

**Denis:** *Self-knowledge and self-experimentation.*

An inclination to involve oneself in the experience seems to be a defining characteristic of today's youth. The idea, for them, of learning by doing, of experimenting rather than exploring by thought alone, indicates the need for active counselling.

For my part, I have been trying, for several years now, to understand what active counselling could entail. I first reflected on the feeling of personal effectiveness (Bandura). It progresses, in adolescence and through life, based on personal goals achieved, milestones reached, challenges faced, encouragement received, results obtained and credit given to oneself; also, on a patient approach to performing tasks and on the ability to manage stress when the going gets tough. In

**"Your path is something that evolves and is very close to a kind of becoming, to personal and existential development."**

a nutshell, self-knowledge becomes self-experimentation and a feeling of competence and optimism with respect to the future. Note that the analysis of traits and factors, and of interests and aptitudes, has its importance, but that nothing beats self-experimentation as a method for validating and clarifying what one wants to become.

**A Cannexus07 (la première édition !), vous avez parlé d' « Un nouveau paradigme d'orientation professionnelle pour un nouveau monde du travail »; Quel message d'espoir espérez-vous encore entendre résonner parmi les gens aujourd'hui? / At Cannexus07 (the first one!) you**



**spoke about 'A New Paradigm of Career Counseling for a New Working World', What is one message you hope is still resonating with people today?**

**Denis:** *La route et le chemin*

Je voudrais que les conseillers et conseillères d'orientation soient conscients de la distinction à faire entre la route qui va d'un point A à un point B le plus rapidement possible et le chemin qui est une bande de terre sur laquelle on marche à pied. Je crois, pour ma part, que l'orientation institutionnelle, celle qui prescrit les moments de choisir et les règles d'entrée et d'avancement dans les multiples programmes de formation emprunte justement la route qui va à la diplomation et à l'emploi le plus directement et adéquatement possible.

L'idée de cheminement définit, pour sa part, une manière non linéaire de penser l'orientation et la carrière. Elle est évolutive et très proche d'un devenir, en quelque sorte, personnel et existentiel. Il s'agit d'un processus de recherche où la personne se connaît dans et par l'action et veut agir avec compétence. Cette approche constructive est caractéristique des gens qui font de leur carrière une affaire personnelle et qui transforment la réussite et l'adversité en capital de confiance. Au total, le chemin se découvre en le faisant et révèle une destination parfois imprévue mais pourtant concluante et satisfaisante.

Souhaitons que la pratique de l'orientation puisse encourager l'évolution de ces deux grandes voies qui servent à se définir dans la perspective de la carrière.

**Denis:** *The road and the path.*

I answer this question by making a distinction between a road, which goes from point A to point B as quickly as possible and a path, which is the strip of earth we walk upon. I think that institutional career counselling—which dictates the times for choosing and the rules for advancing in the various educational programs—uses the road, from getting a degree to getting a job as directly and effectively as possible.

The concept of progressing along a path defines a non-linear way of thinking about career counselling. Your path is something that evolves and is very close to a kind of becoming, to personal and existential development. It is a process of searching, whereby the person recognizes him or herself in and through action, and seeks to act competently. This constructive approach characterizes people who make their career a personal matter and who transform success and adversity into confidence. All told, the path is discovered by venturing forth, revealing a destination that is sometimes unexpected but nevertheless positive and satisfying.

**Lorsque vous regardez devant vous, quel facteur voyez-vous influencer le plus l'avenir du développement de carrière?/ As you look ahead, what factor do you see most influencing the future of career development?**

**Denis :** *Choisir et décider*

Il y a une distinction importante à faire entre choisir et décider. Choisir serait de nature cognitive et décider serait une affaire de motivation. J'en suis maintenant à rechercher une équation décisionnelle qui tiendrait compte des conditions par lesquelles la décision devient affective et effective. Or, je dispose, heureusement, d'une bonne quantité de témoignages qui m'ont été remis lors d'une enquête sur l'occasion à saisir. L'occasion à saisir comporte la particularité d'être un moment fort, intense, et qui offre une opportunité réelle, et non pas hypothétique, à prendre ou à laisser avec peu de temps pour se décider... et avec l'inconnu que cela comporte. Bref, je crois que la décision s'avère, dans ce contexte, de nature surtout émotionnelle et qu'elle surmonte l'incertitude et la complexité grâce à

"Comprenons que l'analyse des traits et facteurs, des intérêts et des aptitudes ont leur importance, mais rien ne vaut l'expérimentation de soi comme moyen de les valider et de clarifier ce que l'on veut devenir."



une évaluation intuitive. Ce sont des éléments qui sont objets d'études en neuropsychologie. Est-ce là une voie d'avenir pour le counseling et l'orientation?

**Denis:** *Choosing and deciding*

There is an important distinction to be made between choosing and deciding. Choosing is a cognitive activity while deciding has to do with motivation. I am now looking for a decision-making equation that takes into account the conditions through which the decision becomes affective and effective. Luckily, I have access to a large quantity of testimonies that I obtained in a study on seizing opportunities. Opportunities feature a strong, intense moment, in which one is offered a real opportunity, and not just a hypothetical one, to “take it or leave it,” and with little time to decide—with all the attendant unknowns. In short, I believe that the decision, in this context, is mostly emotional, and that it overcomes the uncertainty and complexity by making an intuitive assessment. These are elements that are the focus of neuropsychological studies.

Could this be a promising future direction for career counselling?

Si vous souhaitez en savoir plus sur Denis Pelletier, vous pouvez lire une entrevue qu'il a faite avec l'Orientation en 2014. Son article se trouve dans le Volume 4, Numéro 1, pp 29-30.

If you are interested in learning more about Denis Pelletier, you can read an interview that he has done with l'Orientation in 2014. His article is found in Volume 4, Number 1, pp 29-30.

# Canadian Career Development Researcher Database



Are you listed?

CERIC has developed the Canadian Career Development Researcher Database to answer the question: **“Who is doing what research in Canada”?**

Canada is home to many leading researchers across the country, whether at universities or within community-based settings, doing important work across many areas of interest within the career development field. The database brings this rich information together in one easy-to-use searchable online resource.

#### How does it work?

You can search by 40 areas of interest, by province and by individual institution. You can also search for keywords to narrow your results. Or simply browse through the list of 160 researchers and growing.

#### How is the database of use?

Researchers can use the database to identify potential academic and non-academic partners for future research projects. The database is also of value for those seeking to learn about the latest research in any area of career development.

#### How can I add my information?

Researchers are encouraged to take “ownership” of their own profiles and update them as required. If you are doing career development research in Canada and would like to be added to the database, please contact **admin@ceric.ca**.

[ceric.ca/researchers](http://ceric.ca/researchers)

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1. Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced on 8 ½ x 11 quality paper. The length of the paper should be maximum of 30 pages (inclusive of references, tables, graphs, and appendices).
2. The first page should contain the article title, author's name, affiliation, mailing address, email address to which correspondence should be sent, and acknowledgements (if any). To ensure anonymity in the reviewing process, the author's names should not appear anywhere else on the manuscript.
3. The second and third pages should contain an English/French version of an abstract not exceeding 200 words.
4. Language and format (heading, tables, figures, citations, references) must conform to the style of the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association 6<sup>th</sup> edition (APA)*.
5. All figures and tables must appear on separate sheets and be print-ready.
6. Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor in MS Word.
7. The evaluation of manuscripts include criteria such as: significance and currency of the topic; contribution to new knowledge in the field; appropriateness of the methodology or approach; and the clarity of presentation. The review process normally does not exceed three or four months.
8. Submission of a manuscript to *The Canadian Journal of Career Development* implies that this manuscript is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

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1. Les manuscrits doivent être tapés à double interligne sur du papier 8 ½ x 11 de qualité. Les articles ne devraient pas dépasser 30 pages (y compris les références, les tableaux, les graphiques, les annexes).
2. La première page doit contenir le titre de l'article, le nom de l'auteur, l'affiliation, l'adresse postale, le courrier électronique et les remerciements (s'il y a lieu). Pour assurer l'anonymat du processus d'évaluation, le nom de l'auteur ne doit apparaître à aucun autre endroit sur le manuscrit.
3. Les deuxième et troisième pages devront contenir une version française et une version anglaise du résumé dont la longueur ne dépasse pas 200 mots.
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5. Les graphiques et les tableaux doivent être présentés sur des feuilles séparées afin de faciliter le processus de photographie.
6. Les manuscrits doivent être soumis en format MS Word.
7. L'évaluation des articles se fera selon des critères tels que : l'importance et l'actualité du sujet, la contribution à l'avancement des connaissances dans le domaine, une approche méthodologique adéquate et la clarté de la présentation. En général, le processus d'évaluation n'excède pas quatre mois.
8. La soumission d'un manuscrit à la *Revue canadienne de développement de carrière* signifie que cet article n'est pas présentement soumis ailleurs pour fin de publication.





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