
building on what we know

community-interaction
**and its importance for
contemporary careers-work**

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The Career-leaning NETWORK

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the story

engaging a debate

'Community interaction' is the phrase used to refer to how people manage careers in a social context. It was introduced into what was - and still is - an ongoing debate. In 1977 *The British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* (BJGC) gave space to two important but contrary voices. They were Peter Daws and Ken Roberts (both referenced on page 23). The debate was about whether career management was mainly about what people inwardly sought or what they were in a position to find.

what this is about: It raises issues for the importance to career of inner life and other people. Community-interaction thinking points to the ways that any sense of self is gathered from other people. In career that process needs managing in many different ways: we work with colleagues, we work for managers and customers, we work on behalf of family and in response to friends. The details are in the article (page 11): it allows you confidently to say, to the most self-contained and inwardly-driven person you know, that her work is not just for her, it is for other people who count on her, and for anyone who will ever be dependent on her.

Those 'other people' have an interest in how career moves on - hers, yours and mine; and they may watch with interest how well career moves are worked through. Some of those people have a significant influence on how such things are resolved. And not all of those are career professionals.

self versus opportunity: In the debate Ken Roberts argued that most people do not make career decisions in any recognisable sense, they take what's available. He said that professional career-helpers should pay more attention to the socialising influence of upbringing, and also to the selective power of the opportunity structure. Both are 'other-people' influences: the former causes your students and clients to want what the latter causes them to get. Ken was cautious about how much difference careers work could make to those dynamics.

On the other hand, Peter Daws argued for the importance of ideas about the self, pointing to the fact that careers is not just a matter of identifying what employers want, but also about engaging what people seek. He looks to the importance of inner-life for how careers are managed. And he holds that career professionals can help - particularly in careers education.

Nobody argued that you could talk about 'opportunity' without talking about 'self'. So they both were set down, side-by-side, in what was to become an influential framework for our work. It was the DOTS analysis - also published in 1977. It spoke for the importance of learning concerning 'decision', 'opportunity', 'transition' and 'self'. 'Opportunity' was always going to be part of such an analysis. Peter Daws' thinking was there in 'decision' and 'self'. 'But the word 'transition' is there because Ken Roberts' insisted that not nearly enough can be explained in terms of decision. Despite his doubts about the usefulness of our work, Ken may - through DOTS - have found more influence than he sought on its development.

However, the DOTS analysis doesn't try to reconcile self to opportunity - it just lists features of each side-by-side, and leaves you to get on with it.

reshaping the issue

Opportunity-*versus*-self would have been a false dichotomy. People speak of both as one: 'I want to be an engine driver' does so in a single breath. But it still leaves questions. One of them is among the most useful in careers work: 'what gave you the idea of doing that?'. It probes how 'self' and 'opportunity' get it together.

self matching: DOTS has some ready-made ideas for answering the 'what gave you the idea...?' question. People are thought to move on in their career by matching the skills and interests of 'self' to the availability and requirements of 'opportunity'. The idea is embedded in the concept of employability: which is a readiness, by a free-and-responsible self, to move into a plainly-understood work opportunity. We therefore attach a lot of importance to reliably diagnosing skills-and-interests. And we take great care over assembling what we think of as impartial information. All is based on the idea that the one needs to be matched to the other. It's pegs-and-holes thinking - widely embraced, and seeming to many to be perfectly obvious.

community interacting: Community-interaction thinking raises doubts what might seem obvious. The article (Law 1981) argues that what people know about opportunity, and the way they call on aspects of self, work in another way.

What is obvious is that people learn about both from other people. But they learn in more than one setting, and that learning moves along a number of different paths. The way it all works out will, therefore, depend on what sort of attention a person gives to one person rather than another. Career management, then, becomes a matter, not so much of what you know concerning decisions and transitions, but of who you pay attention to among the people you know. It transposes the '*what* gave you the idea...?' question into '*who* gave you the idea...?'.

Community interaction was not introduced into the debate until four years after the 1977 publication. And it reframes the debate. It is not now about whether *self* or *opportunity* are more influential. It is about how much we should expect career management to be driven more by self-opportunity *matching* or more by community *interacting*.

It argues that your students' and clients' career management is more influenced by what happens between them and the people they spend most time with, in whose company they feel most at home, and whose opinions they take most seriously. That proposition can be tested with evidence. The article is therefore a think piece, calling on a broadly-based body of research. It would now announce itself as a 'meta-analysis' of research.

examining evidence

Neither Peter Daws nor Ken Roberts cited much direct evidence. Peter Daws is a psychologist, and argued largely on the basis of individual differences - particularly concerning motivation. Ken Roberts is a sociologist and pointed to big-picture sociological facts and factors. It took another sociologist to move things on. He could see the facts and factors, but he got to them through up-close-and-personal observation.

breaking new ground: It was Paul Willis. He spent a lot of time with working-class lads, watching and listening to how they related to family, to each other and to school. He concluded that they were trapped by their background culture - 'they colluded in their own downfall'. And he used that observation to develop a Marxist analysis of career development.

But, despite these ideological detours, Paul Willis's is the trail-blazing evidence. He can show how the lads - although psychologically different - are bound together by a shared experience. The career management of each is driven as much by their attachment and allegiance to each as it is by any familiarity with 'S', 'O', and 'D', or even 'T'.

The community-interaction paper calls on other evidence - ranging across class and gender. Not all is as closely observed as by Paul Willis. His detailed description of the lads provided me with much of what I needed for framing the findings of the other studies.

following through: There have been later contributors to this stream of ideas - notably Phil Hodgkinson and his colleagues (1996). Their publication reports the experience of a more diverse group of young people than does Paul Willis. More than a decade after, both earlier articles, it gives community interaction a slight nod. It also introduces abstractions from French sociology - notably 'habitus', which the community-interaction article had at least partially anticipated in its use of the more concrete term 'habitat'.

More recently still, Howard Williamson (2004), whose close observation rates comparison with Paul Willis, sets out cultural influences on the careers of working-class boys - this time following that influence over a twenty-year period.

tracking take-up

The 1981 publication of the community-interaction article was shortly after the 1977 DOTS analysis, and shortly before we got the full impact of the 1979 election. This was bad timing. In another life the article might well have raised questions about whether DOTS was a comprehensive-enough a model - suggesting early modifications. But it didn't.

The article was well-enough received. It took its place as part of theory in careers-work training courses. And it was one of thirteen articles selected for republication, in celebration of the BJGC's first twenty years (Dryden and Watts, 1993; my commentary is reprinted here on page 26).

performance for policy: The 1997 election opened the way to a radical and well-prepared change in the policy discourse on education. Influential voices were ready with an ideology which pursued economic competitiveness, realised through market-place decision-making, and achieved by free-standing individuals. A dominant voice in the careers-work policy discourse of the 1980s was the employers' organisation - the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). Such interests need readily communicable, and quantifiable, ways of saying what they need to be done. That discourse developed performance indicators that both the CBI's customers and The Treasury could understand. They were written up as quality standards, learning outcomes and accountable outputs.

Such thinking had little resonance with community-interaction thinking; it describes layered, changing and - at times - contradictory processes. But the DOTS analysis proved more useful to dominant interests. It was, after all, first developed as a checklist for identifying the coverage of careers-work programmes. It readily transposes into an inventory of factors which bare upon career management - a list of things worth checking on. Little imagination is needed for turning its lists into new performance indicators - all the original conceptualising work had already been done.

And so, it has reappeared in a number of performance-related taxonomies. It was transposed into a three-fold analysis for scripting careers education and guidance - 'understanding self...', 'investigating careers...' and 'implementing plans' (SCAA, 1995).

A closely-similar analysis re-appears as 'personal management', 'learning and work exploration' and 'life-work building' in the Canadian *Blue Print for Life-Work Designs* (National Work-Life Centre 2009). Both of these triangulated variations on DOTS visualise a free-standing self, moving into a well-defined opportunity. The self is unambiguously accountable; the opportunity is plainly unproblematic. This is not community-interaction thinking. It is, pretty-well entirely, another way-of-seeing things.

DOTS dissemination: There is something else: ideas get embedded when people find ways of using them. And, as part of the newly-formed National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC), I - soon after its publication - built DOTS into a series of training modules. The NICEC modules framed an interactive examination of what can be done in all areas of careers work. They were accessible through a handful of outreach centres, stretching from Peterhead to Swansea. The material was handed on; so much so that I found myself being handed my own much-photocopied pages - and, on one memorable occasion, being accused of plagiarising them. It was an effective strategy - in some ways a pre-www network.

This is guesswork: but the leverage of performance-driven policy and the widely located positioning of DOTS, together, trapped community-interaction thinking. And I was partly responsible for that pincer-squeeze. What was it that Paul Willis said about the possibility of 'colluding in your own downfall'?

more new thinking: But people also think for themselves. And Sara Bosley (2004) has done some of the most useful work in developing community-interaction thinking. Her research evidence portrays people seeking a basis for action, which they can recognise in other people's lives. In Sara's sample people take a particular interest in the help they get, from working people whom they can actually meet. Her observation significantly adds to community-interaction thinking, by describing the link between self and opportunity in more subtle terms. There are two valued aspects:

1. on opportunity: people accord credibility to the other person's 'insider knowledge', based on direct-and-personal experience of work; and
2. on self: they value the contact for the way that other person's experience 'resonates' with their own.

But none of this has led to any change in the DOTS analysis. I'm surprised we had to wait for significant adjustment until I published a major restructuring of the model (Law, 2005). No other critique appeared until - shortly after that - Phil McCash (2006) published his historiographic essay.

developing practice

Community interaction does not entirely dismiss DOTS, it relocates it. There are people who go through a DOTS-like matching process in managing their career. It is useful to those people - who are used to articulating experience in such terms, brought up to believe in the efficacy of hope, comfortable with consulting our kind of expertise, The idea of an adviser, taking them through a list of factors, for making a decision, would not phase them in any way. And, if asked, they would give that process a positive evaluation.

But it is a moot point what proportion of our population is comprised of these confident, articulate and well-enough connected people. And there are big questions about whether they are the people for whom we should be developing our most basic model for help. If those doubts are as justified as this evidence suggests, then we need another model.

But when it comes to translating evidence into alternative practice the record is not good. It is hard to see what careers workers can do about Paul Willis's Marxist analysis. Phil Hodgkinson declines to comment on the implications of his findings for practice. And, although Howard Williamson's sharp observation of detail offers useful clues to action, he does not develop them.

thinking conventionally: Meanwhile, DOTS-like thinking got embedded in conventional wisdom; and that became, itself, a problem for innovation. The 'reliable' and 'impartial' apparatus of self-matching represented a major part of guidance expertise. It can seem that, whatever the career-management question, more more-of-the-same is the answer.

Take what both Paul Willis and Howard Williamson show about how background and neighbourhood influences can lead people into counter productive - even self-destructive - action. Conventional expertise has a ready-made retort: 'surely what we should be doing is somehow getting them to pay more attention to our expertise'. The careers-work literature is peppered with such claims: few students are engaging with science, technology, engineering and maths? - then strengthen the provision for guidance; credit-crunch displacement is penalising school- and college-leavers? - then bump up our work; what more can trades unions do about fair access to opportunity? - let's get them more involved in guidance; economic migrants need help finding their membership of society? - that's what our expertise is for; older people feel unwanted for the loss of contact with working life? - trust us, we know what to do about that.

Sometimes, sometimes not. Many such programmes do look wider - drawing on learning-from-experience, informal mentoring, story-sharing, and other - often curriculum-based - community-interactive techniques. But by no means invariably.

And to be fair, we haven't yet got a wide-enough range of practice-based observations to be sure about where and how community-interactive methods would be most effective. But we can legitimately ask whether - in all these cases - going-with-the-flow of how people naturally learn from each other, would be an important component in working out what to do to help them. If that is so, community-interactive thinking would radically expand on self-matching thinking. And we need that kind of lateral thinking.

thinking again: In all cases the argument is that we should not be encouraging people to pay less attention to community interactions, we should be encouraging them to pay more. Whatever is learned in community interaction can be re-learned in community interaction - where that interaction makes new contacts, in formerly unexplored locations and engaging as yet untried activities. By engaging the dynamics of the process in a wider range of encounters we can broaden and deepen people's basis for hope. All of this argues, not for resisting the natural dynamics of informal mentoring, socio-emotional influences and community-based experience, but for richer ways of engaging them.

Descriptions of how this can be done are set out in *The Pre-vocational Franchise - Organising Community-linked Education for Adult and Working Life* (Law, 1986). A key concept is 'franchise' - working with other people, alongside career professionals. That includes other professionals; but effective community interaction needs the useful experience of other-than-professionals. The strategy does not undermine career-work professionalism, but it does significantly reposition it.

In seven chapters - based on an actual programmes of work - the *Franchise* assembles ideas for the apparatus needed for this work. That ranges from mapping the community and building networks, through identifying the distinctive authority of experience and negotiating agreements, to locating the programme among its stakeholders and embedding it in the organisation. The programmes described are - in various ways - integrated with both curriculum and community. Informal mentoring schemes are

highlighted. The complementary relationship between expert-based and experience-based learning is probed. And ways of setting down learning from that widening range of formal and informal sources are examined - including, in particular, the uses of autobiographical writing.

The *Franchise* set out to do for community interaction what the NICEC training modules did for DOTS.

thinking locally: Community-interaction is a 'mid-range' account of career management - it does not ignore big-picture social structures, neither does it dismiss inner-life, but it focuses on how the two interact. And there is, right here, a further tension between the ways community-interacting and person-matching visualises that.

The detailed listing of performance indicators in some customer-driven accounts of learning, have come to be seen as 'entitlements'. It is short step from listing what people might gain from 'D', 'O', 'T' and 'S', to claiming that all people have a right to those gains. And 'entitlement' implies that all careers workers have a responsibility to provide for it.

But, while entitlement is universal, community interaction is local. *Franchise* talk of 'stakeholders', 'networks' and 'community links' means thinking in terms of the locations which students and clients inhabit. Community interaction uses the ecological metaphor of 'habitat'. Those localities can be variously mapped - as catchments, neighbourhoods and networks, But each is different from any other - presenting a different starting-point for the expansion of horizons, and needing different methods for achieving it. There can only be a very generalised basis for any the-same-for-everybody entitlement.

The rhetoric of entitlement sees its negation as a 'postcode lottery'. But to map local enclaves is to appreciate that what might work for some habitats, will not work for all. That is discoverable by walking a few hundred metres, in any almost any town or city. To do that is to notice how each cluster of streets - how the people look, what is in their shops, how they get about, the ways in which they arrange their space and time - speaks of the different ways in which different groups manage their lives. There are also postcode realities.

A useful concept, developed by sociologist Mary Douglas (2002), is of 'enclaves' - social settings which, although part of the whole of society - are nonetheless significantly different from each other. They are different in the way they see themselves as detached from the rest, in the vigilance they exercise concerning who belongs, and in the views they harbour concerning outsiders.

There are, of course, enclaves in leafy suburbs and gated communities, as well as in inner cities and villages. Indeed enclaves may be a more useful way of thinking about social stratification than are the traditional indicators of identity politics - gender, race, and class. Deprivation and privilege - both forms of exclusion - are increasingly a matter of where you live. There are localities where black working-class women are doing very well, and others where they are not.

The importance of such observations is acknowledged by commercial interests. How producers now target consumers is increasingly mapped on a post-coded basis (Experion, 2009). What frames effective selling can also frame effective helping.

Much of this helps to explain why the idea of entitlement does not have a good track record for improving life chances: entitlements tend to favour people best-positioned to exploit them. But community-interaction thinking argues that we must start from where people are, drawing on the local dynamics that already drive their lives. And we can do that by broadening horizons and enriching experience - other people to talk to, new things to do to, different places to go. It is as important for those trapped in gated communities as for those trapped in inner cities, In ways the *Franchise* lays out, it can introduce any of our people to the-likes-of-whom-they've-never-met-before.

narratives on the net: What Mary Douglas describes geographically, you can now find virtually. On the internet, the opportunities for seeking out people with similar brand preferences, sporting allegiances, life-style choices, and value commitments, are - to all intents and purposes - limitless. But these are not mind-broadening or horizon-extending dynamics. They reinforce the beliefs, values and expectations with which people boot-up in the first place. People are seeking other people whose stories are in some way similar to their own. The internet facilitates the formation of enclaves.

A feature of all this is sharing narratives. The use of narratives on the net is widely acknowledged as increasingly significant: it influences users' sense of self (Lundby, 2008); it strengthens users' claims to authorship of their own lives (Friedlander, 2008); and it works well in a partnerships between user experience and professional expertise (Hartland, 2008). Careers work has thoroughly exploited the digital potential for collation and search. But it has done little with word-processing. And the filmic uses of narratives on the net have appeared only recently. We still need to work out how best to engage students and clients with net-based accounts of experience at work.

Community-interaction thinking draws on informal experience - and experience is best set out as narrative. The most engaging qualities of narrative are thoughts-and-feelings about how no story has to end where it started, that there are turning points, encounters and different points-of-view, and that there can therefore be change-of-direction. Narrative tension consists in the surprises that all this brings. These ideas are now being incorporated into a filmic technique for students and clients, a direct descendant of community interaction, called 'three-scene storyboarding' (Law, 2009).

But there are issues. The development of the internet is described in three phases: web 1.0 gave access; 2.0 invited participation, and - now - 3.0 releases creativity. Self-matching ideas have not required us to move much beyond 1.0. Filmic processes of developing narrative leap to 3.0. The three phases of development each poses its own issues. Phase-one concerned how to use the technology - and this is no longer an issue, students and clients use the net better than we can. Phase-two concerned why engaging with the internet is useful - posing issues for the meanings and purposes represented on the net. Phase-three questions seriously deepen the issues - raising questions about who is worth linking to, interacting with, following, and trusting with disclosure. We have a lot still to learn about how best to engage those questions in education (DCSF, 2009).

But they raise exactly the questions that Sara Bosley's work (page 4) identified - 'what is the relationship between the new things that this other person might have to say?'; and 'how does that resonate with how I currently see myself?'. It is, at root, the community-interactive question - how does 'self' best link to 'opportunity'?

interrogating experience: Community-interaction thinking is about socio-emotive influences on career, and it throws up another issue for DOTS-like models. We have seen how and why it is possible to describe person-matching wholly individualistically, as if in a social vacuum. But it includes the possibility of seeing person-matching as the result of just finding things out - the individual becoming aware of information. There is a viewpoint on this which persuades itself that when you've told people things 'now they know - don't they!'. Anybody involved in learning is forced to say - as often as not - 'no they don't'. There is a lot to think about in how people acquire career-learning from other people, shape it, and make it a basis for their own action. The DOTS analysis had no place for that understanding. It could not show you where to start, how to continue, and when you have done enough. The greater complexity and dynamism we find in careers management, the greater the need to understand how people get their own grip on things. In order to understand this we need to understand learning processes - not just what people learn but how they learn*.

* The original thinking for this is included in a further contribution to this series *building on what we know* (Law, in preparation)

And so, examining overall patterns of career-experience-and-learning leads to a realisation that expanding DOTS-like analyses into community interactions, means also expanding it into learning processes. It gives us three dimensions to work with - (1) what DOTS *covers*, (2) what socio-emotive *influences* bare upon learning, and (3) by what *processes* people take learning on board. The natural successor to the DOTS model is, then, the CPI model - 'C for coverage', 'P for 'processes' and 'I for influences'. (Law, 2005).

The process dimension is framed by 'learning verbs'. They are organised around ideas of 'finding out' what is going on, 'sorting out' facts and impression into useable order, 'checking out' what needs further probing and 'working out' how one thing leads to another.

And it is this process dimension which will prove most significant for the learning use of web 3.0 - and its resolution of what, above, we called phase-three questions - how anybody knows what to pay attention to? what can help? who to believe? what will work? and who to trust? These are all process-driven questions. And they are posed most critically by the socio-emotional attachments and allegiances signposted by community-interaction thinking.

practice as validation: Part of the subtext here is about the relationship between scholarly and useful purposes. Some of the reluctance to point to practical consequence, displayed by some of the authors cited here, has to do with the way they see themselves as contributing to an academic rather than a practical discourse.

However there is a growing acknowledgement that identifying and testing practical outcomes is itself an intellectually validating activity. This is because pointing to action requires an hypotheses along the lines - 'this being so, we can expect these kinds of effects from this kind of action...'. Community interaction thinking does that. And when, in practice things work out as in thinking they are anticipated, that hypotheses can be retained. There is no more graphic, nor more important, validation of research. In the emerging literature it is called 'catalytic validation' (Cohen and others, 2000)

contemporary importance of community interaction

If careers work were a commercial enterprise its product would be hope. Instead community interaction works to enrich hope. It does that by setting career management in a social context - showing how work life is not just about a marketing self but more fully a social self - a self-with-others.

That thinking accords with contemporary concerns for work-life balance at home and quality-of-life in neighbourhoods. It also accords with people's growing concerns for how work affect the developing world and impacts the environment. People increasingly see that some work hurts Africa, and that all work has a carbon footprint.

There are tensions, and we should not evade them. We work with the influences of background cultures. And that means working with how people move on - in some ways holding on to the past, but simultaneously reaching out for the future. How clients and students manage that is their task. Ours is to enable them.

All of these possibilities and issue relate to community-interaction's central question - how does self interact with opportunity. By no means the least important aspect of that question is for how people sustainably get what they need from the internet.

The 1981 paper was not prophetic of all these possibilities. But it did point us in the right direction for the resolution of these issues.

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The Pre-vocational Franchise

is available from:

www.amazon.co.uk/Pre-Vocational-Franchise-Organizing-Community-Education/dp/0063183544/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1250676444&sr=1-1

a film of Bill talking about
DOTS, information, experience, culture and globalisation
is available at
www.careersbox.co.uk/video/bill_law/bill_law_film_2_lmi_lme.wvx

the article
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Thinking about career development changes not only in response to the discovery of new empirical evidence but also in response to prevailing social climates. In contemporary Britain both the evidence and the social climate are pointing to yet new formulations of career-development theory in terms which accord overriding importance neither to the explanations offered by the sociologist nor to those offered by the psychologist. Some of this evidence is examined, and a theoretical formulation is attached to it. The implications are that guidance practitioners should see themselves both as applied psychologists and as applied sociologists.

The struggle for understanding is riven by the capacity of *homo sapiens* to generate more than one explanatory hypothesis for every observation. It is what makes human thought and conversation dynamic, not static. There is always another way of configuring the evidence (cf. Pirsig, 1974).

The opening section of this paper is an attempt to elaborate three propositions:

1. thinking about career development is not static but dynamic, continuously re-configuring available evidence;
2. each new attempt seeks in part to resolve problems left by previous attempts: but
3. each new generation seeks also to achieve a congruence with the social and cultural ambience in which it is set, so that such ambiances represent a 'readiness' for the acceptance of new ideas about career development. (The development and linkages described briefly here are explored in more detail in Law, 1980)

This section will then be followed by an attempt to outline an emergent theoretical formulation having some resonance with the preoccupations in contemporary Britain.

changing society - changing theory

scientific matching theories: The earliest attempts to crystallise career-development thinking occurred in the wake of movements to formalise careers guidance. Those movements occurred in societies well into a process of change brought about by the application of science and technology to the means of production, distribution and exchange, and by an increasing movement of people both from rural to urban living,

and - particularly in the case of the United States - from one national culture to another. The demands made by the labour economies of these societies were changing, and so were the informal attachments in neighbourhood and community which had formerly carried people into their places in those economies.

Shertzer and Stone (1971) attribute the first use of the term vocational guidance to Frank Parsons who established his agency in Boston in 1908. The thinking underlying Parsons' work can be summarised in three statements: people are different from each other; so are jobs; it should be possible by a study of both to achieve a match between person and job. Similar thinking underlay the establishment in Britain of Juvenile Employment Bureaux in 1911.

As Beck (1963) has argued, a problem posed in part by an increasingly scientific society was likely to be met by a similarly scientific response. Thinking about career development was accordingly dominated increasingly by the assumed need to generate verifiable data about individuals and jobs. The work of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in Britain between the two world wars rested upon such scientific matching assumptions. The tradition is not dead. Kline (1975) has recently argued for scientific matching theories of career development as a basis for practice, characterising guidance as 'fitting men to jobs' (sic!). And a current project (Kirton, 1979) is addressed to the problem of establishing verifiable differences between jobs, and psychometrically diagnosing the validity of people's perceptions of them.

humanistic theories: By the early 1960s, however, new ideas were being imported from the United States, and were finding fertile soil in Britain in which to take root. Rogers (1951) drew attention to the way in which each individual uniquely and internally configures his or her experience of self and situation. The dissemination of thinking in the United States led, for a time, to the virtual abandonment of psychometric techniques. But it has subsequently led to an interest in knowing how best to use psychometric techniques as a stimulus to client participation in helping relationships (Goldman, 1961), and to the development for research and practice of more subtle techniques for identifying the phenomenology of the individual (Gould, 1969; Edmonds, 1979).

Again, Roe (1956) pointed to the way in which individuals seeking work are not merely engaged in the task of economic survival, but are pursuing satisfaction for a variety of different sorts of deficit needs or self-actualising motivations. Daws' (1968) argument for a 'comprehensive matching' model for guidance is parallel with Roe's contribution. He argues that more attention should be paid to the way in which people seek satisfactions for needs and values - as well as marketing their talents - in their work. A colleague and I (Law and Ward, 1981) have recently sifted British evidence in support of Daws' contention.

As a further development Super (1957) was among those who applied developmental frameworks to the configuration of evidence about career choice. This articulated an understanding that people do not choose a career in an isolated moment of time, and linked the variety of respects in which today's decision rests upon yesterday's experiences.

Moreover, Rogers (1951) refused to accept that career development in particular could be adequately conceived in isolation from general human development. The progressive broadening of frames of reference for thinking about career development has subsequently included Samler's (1961) criticism of the lack of 'psycho-social' material in occupational information, Hayes' (1971) research into the changing appreciation in young workers of the importance of administrative and social working situations, and Super's (1980) massive conception of 'life-space-life-span' as a framework for considering career development.

These ideas invite an understanding of career development in terms of whole persons, each uniquely responding to his or her feelings, needs, and growing experience. They are features which can be subsumed beneath the label 'humanistic'. The Schools Council's Careers Education and Guidance Project* defies exact categorisation, but its developmental sequence of stimuli of personal responses to a broad range of career-related issues represents one of the most thoroughgoing implementations of humanistic theory to be developed in Britain.

It is argued here that it is no accident that such ideas emerged more-or-less contemporaneously in the United States, and were accepted more-or-less contemporaneously in Britain. They emerged and were accepted to the extent that the societies in which they appeared no longer thought of themselves as supported by a single moral spine transmitting a coherent set of moral messages. Technological changes in communication and transportation had put more voices in each ear and more images in each eye. There was an increasing awareness in these societies of the relativity and vulnerability of their cosmologies. Official, traditional, stereotyped and establishment ways of representing reality to the people became profoundly suspect. Such societies were progressively becoming more of a problem to themselves. In this ambience, thinking about career development which - like scientific matching theory - looked as though it could be used to fit people into unproblematic slots in society, became profoundly suspect. In such a ferment of doubt and re-examination, there was a high degree of readiness for new ideas which invited people to think about career development in terms of how each individual developed in response to a growing, unique, feeling and whole sense of self - a self-concept.

functionalist theories: Up to the late 1960s the story could be told almost wholly in terms of concepts derived from differential, developmental and counselling psychology. But, as Dovey (1980) has pointed out in his discussion of guidance in South Africa, thinking about how people find work eventually touches upon the philosophical and political assumptions that we make concerning the relationship between people and society, and will tend to be accepted or rejected on the basis of those assumptions. The Schools Council Project materials did so, and formed part of a discussion in which sociologists were progressively becoming more involved.

In the Britain of the 1970s it was the sociologists who most sought to reconfigure the evidence. For example, K. Roberts (1968; 1971; 1977) was already arguing that people do not choose jobs: they take what is available. In Roberts' view all the major determinants of occupational status lie outside the individual. They are to be found in the currents of socialisation to which the individual is subjected, and in the vortex of the socially-classified labour economy. The economy controls by what is offered; and an adequate account of the process can be given with little reference to the influence of needs, aspirations, feelings or personal views of individuals.

Readiness for such ideas lay in a growing scepticism concerning the appropriateness of the psychology-bound theories which had preceded them. In particular, the relative contraction of the labour economy - and, in particular, the hard consequences of structural unemployment - were, by the late 1970s, causing many people to rethink the

* The Schools Council occupied the position later occupied by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) - now the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA). Its careers education and guidance project undertook a thorough reworking of careers-education. The core resource was a series of simulated tabloid newspapers, containing socially-interactive news items and images, cartoons, quizzes, comment and opinion pieces. The method was to stimulate curiosity, provoke responses, engage critical thinking and real-time classroom activity. It was supported by a staff-development programme. Some saw it as more of a problem than a solution. It did not survive the 1980s - leaving plenty of room for more conventional ideas.

relationship between people and society: placing less emphasis upon the choices of individuals and more upon the requirements of society. Theories of career development which suggested that who-does-what in society is best explained in terms of the functioning of social forces seemed to many like a breath of fresh air into the tedious - some might say 'wet' - obfuscations of introspective psychology.

The ensuing debate has been cast in terms of a discussion concerning the relative importance of accounts offered by sociology and psychology in explaining and predicting career development (Speakman, 1976; Law, 1976; Daws, 1977; K. Roberts, 1981; Daws, 1981). Some of the interest in the debate may be attributable to the fear that the powerfully functional explanations of the sociologists appear to leave guidance practitioners with little significant to do between the extremes of ovine compliance and bloody revolution.

evidence for community interaction in career development

But sociologists have not yet finished with thinking about career development. It is now becoming possible to trace the rough shape of newly-emerging conceptions which are drawn on a narrower canvas than that suggested by functionalist theories, yet which still pay careful attention to situational influences in the career development of individuals. These conceptions suggest that the way in which who-does-what in society is decided is the product of a plurality of interpersonal transactions conducted in local settings, and on the basis of interaction within and between groups of which the individual is a member - the 'community'. It is moreover a conception of exchange between the individual and his or her environment which may prove to have significant resonances with emerging preoccupations in our society: notably with pleas for a more human scale and texture to the structuring of our enterprises, and with an increasingly ecological understanding of the relationship between individual and environment.

The term 'community' is notoriously problematic, and it is not used here to connote benign influence in a succouring or protective sense. Instead, it is used for its alternative connotation of plurality of interpersonal exchange. It is, in that sense, a rag-bag concept selected to represent a rag-bag reality. It corresponds in some important respects with the ecological concept of 'territory' and with the more popular term 'patch'. What characterises the raw data upon which the concept of community interaction draws is not their newness: much has been lying around for some time. It is to be found in their common reference to the importance to our understanding of the exchange which occurs between the individual and the other members of the groups of which he or she is a member.

studies in career development: Such studies include specific enquiries into career development, focusing on approaches and entry to the working world. K. Roberts himself drew upon evidence (Veness, 1962; Maizels, 1970) indicating that a high proportion of school leavers paid a great deal of attention to what they learned in their community contacts (parents, siblings, peers, neighbours, teachers, etc.) in preparing themselves for career choices and transitions. Carter's (1962) study of the school-leaving experiences of 200 youngsters in five schools in an industrial city in Britain indicates some important distinctions between different types of family values and identifies their influences upon the career aspirations of youngsters. And Gupta (1977) is among those who have provided evidence to support the view that family support can enhance the life-chances of children of working-class immigrant families.

Again, Willis (1977) offers an illuminative account of the interpersonal influence of the peer group, describing how a small group of working-class lads at school select futures for themselves on the basis of a strong sense of identification with the group. They share the same school with the 'conformists', whom they despise. But tribal affiliation to their

own 'non-conforming' group means that for 'the likes of us' the way is going to be different, with better short-term and worse long-term rewards. Membership of the group is the arbiter of choice, leading to distrust of the school's attempts to offer careers guidance, subversion of its attempts to change them, and claims to (and defence of) unsupervised territory in the school in which they can assert and celebrate their own group dominance.

studies in the sociology of education: British explorations into the sociology of education - focusing on the impact of education, family, etc. on the educability of children - provide further elaborations of the concept of community interaction. For example, studies (e.g. Jackson and Marsden, 1962) of the way in which academically-achieving children of working-class families cope with their own prospect of upward social mobility show that the claims of childhood community memberships are strong. Sometimes such memberships seem to make it impossible for the youngsters to escape, so that the prospect of upward social mobility *via* higher education is rejected; even where the prospect is accepted, they lead to considerable strains between the youngsters and their family and neighbourhood of origin. Some youngsters make the break, and some do not.

More recently, Bernstein (1965) and Lawton (1968) have examined the way in which the differential use of interpersonal communication in working-class and middle-class homes leads to differential systems of identification with groups. The Plowden Committee (1967) made more extensive enquiries indicating the way in which a variety of family influences affect youngsters' use of educational opportunity. Miller (1971) showed that some of these value-laden attitudes could be isolated and shown to be more predictive of educational achievement than could crude sociological criteria, such as membership of a social class.

studies in the sociology of the school: Investigations into the sociology of the school - focusing on the patterns of interaction within schools - extend the emerging attention to ways in which membership of interpersonal groups influences the aspirations of young people. Hargreaves' (1967) participant-observer investigation of social relations in a secondary school outlines the influence on the personal development of youngsters of their membership of subcultures within the school, and of the intended and unintended consequences for the students of the way in which their teachers respond by categorising the students in terms of their perceptions of these subcultures. Furthermore, Ford's (1968) study of social relations in schools indicates that students are much more likely to choose friends from people of like ability and social background, than from the structured social groups which schools form in order to foster social mixing. Membership of a social group tends, then, to override the structural attempts of the school to encourage socially heterogeneous experiences for individuals. The students stick to their own kind. Ford made one other discovery which significantly elaborates that finding: where able children from working-class backgrounds have been selected into working groups for higher ability, those youngsters seem able to disentangle themselves from membership of working-class groups and to view themselves as prospective members of the middle class. The opportunity they have to make friendships with middle-class peers appears to be a significant aspect of this upward aspiration on their part.

The main thrust of such conclusions has received some support from a more recent study by Rutter *et al.* (1979) of the effects upon their students of twelve London secondary schools. The study suggests that 'physical and administrative' features of the organisation of schools (such as the status and sex composition of the schools, their size and available space, the age of their buildings, the teacher-student ratios, the size of their classes, and the type of internal organisational structure they adopt) have little effect on the attendance, behaviour, achievement or delinquency records of their students. But such outcomes seem to be significantly affected by those features of the school which have to do with 'interpersonal contexts' (such as the degree of emphasis

placed on doing academic work, the style of interaction in class between teacher and student, the use made of rewards and praise, the extent to which students are able socially to contact and influence their teachers, the extent to which students are given responsibility in the school, continuity of contact with teachers, and stability of student groupings).

international comparisons: Weir (1977) has assembled American and Australian evidence closely parallel to the British evidence cited above. Much of her evidence is well-known. It includes, for example, Kahl's (1953) study of 24 'common-man boys' which showed that the sorts of values inculcated at home have considerable predictive power: 'getting-ahead' values suggest that upward mobility is more likely, and 'getting by' values suggest that it is less likely. Weir also refers to Rosenthal's (1968) study suggesting that teacher expectations sometimes have a powerful effect on student performance in class.

a mid-range focus: Such an assembly of evidence re-configures our picture of how who-does-what is decided and, accordingly, it redirects our attention. Its primary focus is neither upon 'big-picture' trends identified by the telescopes of functionalist sociology, nor upon the 'small-picture' refinements afforded by the microscopes of differential, developmental and counselling psychology. Its focus is mid-range: referring to, and demonstrating the importance to our understanding of, the way in which both 'big-picture' and 'small-picture' events occur in the context of 'community interaction' between the individual and the social group of which he or she is a member. The evidence gives foreground significance to the personal exchanges which occur between individuals and the people with whom they are in community contact - notably family, neighbourhood, peer group, ethnic group, and teachers at school. It strongly suggests that, whatever explanatory and predictive significance we may wish to assign to self-concept or to opportunity structure as influences upon career development, that significance will be modified by exchanges occurring between the individual and the groups of which he or she is a member. It moves towards an explanation of career development which is likely to appeal to guidance practitioners working with clients unable to take a perspective on themselves or their situation generated beyond earshot of a shout for a home goal at their local football ground - their 'patch'.

processes of community interaction

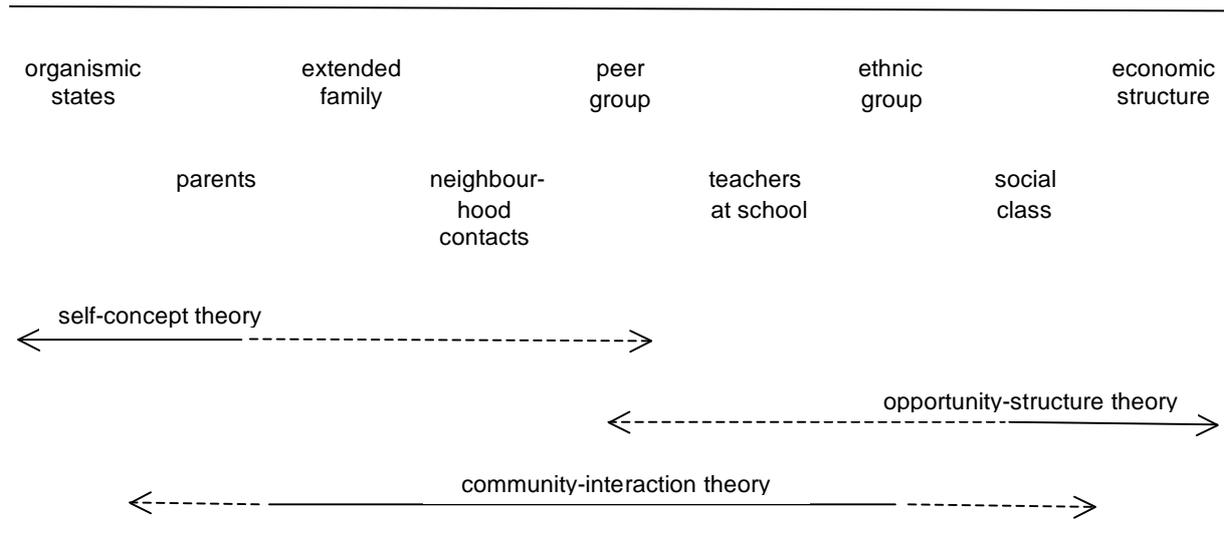
The evidence cited above supports a general case for seeking a mid-range focus for theories of career development. But it also leaves us with a further task: to examine the relationship between such a focus and earlier thinking.

community as a transmitter of motivation: A spectrum of influences - ranging between 'small-picture' psychological and 'big-picture' sociological influences - have been identified in a review of evidence undertaken by a colleague and myself (Law and Ward, 1981) concerning motivation for career development. The psychological pole of that spectrum is identified where the roots of motivation are to be found in organismic needs (Roe, 1956). There are then progressively more interactive influences like those between child and early parenting (Bordin *et al.*, 1963), the transmission of parental values (Kahl, 1953; Carter, 1962), peer-group identifications (Willis, 1977), and membership of ethnic groups (Strodtbeck, 1965; Gupta, 1977). More generally sociological influences may be found in social-class membership (Hollingshead, 1949; Fogelman, 1979) and in the rewards and incentives offered by the labour economy (Roberts, 1977). The relationship between internally experienced needs and drives, and externally experienced incentives and rewards, cannot be described in the simplistic terms of a confrontation between 'self' and 'situation'. The events of motivated career development cannot be described wholly in the psychological terms of needs pursued, nor wholly in the sociological terms of incentives offered. Instead, a great deal of the

process of identifying motivation for career development occurs in mid-range transaction involving the participation of parents, family, neighbourhood, peer groups and ethnic group - the rag-bag of community, territory or patch.

The spectrum-configured analysis of data on motivation suggests the possibility of configuring the evidence from the studies mentioned in the previous section in a manner indicated by figure 1.

figure 1: spectrum of self-concept, community-interaction and opportunity-structure influences upon career development



The spectrum is not complete, drawing only upon influences identified by studies cited in this paper. Neither is it possible precisely to order the sequence of influences on such a spectrum. Its purpose is to suggest that crude distinctions between self-concept theory and opportunity-structure theory lack the subtlety of analysis which the evidence now demands. Self-concept theory - although it refers to other sources of influence - is articulated from the left of the diagram; opportunity-structure theory is similarly articulated from the right. A focus upon community interaction - articulated from the middle - unifies the presentation by drawing attention, for example, to the way in which the demands and incentives, of the labour economy are learned through a range of community interactions.

community as a modifier of social functioning: Community-interaction processes, however, not only *transmit* the effects of 'big-picture' sociological processes: they also *modify* these effects. Social-class attitudes are transmitted to youngsters through their families, but *not* in a way which permits simple prediction from social-class membership (Miller, 1971). Peer-group membership can confirm people in the predictions which functionalist sociology would make for them (Willis, 1977), but it can also wean them away from those predictions (Ford, 1968). Although membership of a minority ethnic group is often a crude predictor of low occupational achievement, membership of a highly aspiring (even, to the external observer, 'unrealistically' aspiring), supportive and reinforcing ethnic minority *can* lead to occupational achievement which 'big-picture' sociological categories do not predict (Gupta, 1977).

modes of community influence: The community mediates and modifies structural influences upon individuals. It also transmits its own influence on individuals. And it does so in a variety of identifiable - although overlapping - ways or modes.

- > There is evidence that **expectations** may be transmitted through the values of family or peer group (Carter, 1962; Willis, 1977). The term 'expectation' can be used, therefore, to refer to the cues, pressures, and enticements that are often embedded in membership of groups.
- > There is evidence that **feedback** may be transmitted - in the sense of the messages that people receive concerning their suitability for different sorts of social roles (Bernstein, 1965; Hargreaves, 1967). The term 'feedback' can be used, therefore, to refer to the images that people can receive of themselves by their participation in those groups.
- > There is evidence that **support** may be transmitted - in the sense of the reinforcements to aspiration offered by the parents of some immigrant families (Gupta, 1977). The term 'support' can be used, therefore, to refer to the reinforcements and encouragements that group-membership can entail.
- > There is evidence that **modelling** may be transmitted - in the sense of the opportunity to meet and understand ways of life outside those of the person's origins (Ford, 1968). The term 'modelling' can be used, therefore, to refer to the flesh-and-blood examples which offer specific targets for identification to members of the group.
- > And there is evidence that **information** may be transmitted - in the sense of the direct observations and reports that youngsters are able to have of the work habits and patterns of the people they contact in their day-to-day lives (Veness, 1962). The term 'information-provision' can be used, therefore, to refer to the communication of impressions, images and data which people distil from conversation in the groups of which they are members.

There are undoubtedly other contents to messages transmitted by means of the influence of expectation, feedback, support, modelling and information-provision. Other and future research data will further define and extend our understanding of such modes of influences. But, even within the limits of the data cited here, a near-to-complete account of the way in which community-interaction occurs would require some account to be given of events in each of the 30 cells set out in figure 2.

figure 2: sources and influences of community-interaction

sources influences	parents	extended family	neighbourhood contacts	peer group	ethnic group	teachers at school
expectations						
feedback						
support						
modelling						
information						

theoretical formulation

The closest approach to the formulation of a community-interaction theory has been that of R.J. Roberts (1980), although he claims to have advanced little beyond the threshold of a theory-building undertaking. While paying serious attention to social influence upon career development, he also draws heavily upon the sort of phenomenological perspective proposed by Rogers (and later used in this country by Hargreaves and Willis). R.J. Roberts suggests that an understanding of career development is best achieved by means of a biographical account of the way in which each individual constructs a constantly changing series of representations of self and situation. Those constructions are built from the process of interaction with members of the social group to which the individual belongs. The constructions of reality will, for any individual, show some similarity and some dissimilarity with those of other members of the group. There is, accordingly, no absolutely agreed 'self' or 'society' to arbitrate upon career development. There is only what each individual continuously negotiates from the process of interaction. 'Society' is not a massive and impersonal entity, like that described as 'opportunity structure' in functionalist accounts of career development. It is people: individuals in interaction with members of their various groups, constructing partly-shared representations of where they believe themselves to be. 'Self' is not a static collection of introspective statements, as implied by the humanists' use of the term 'self-concept': it is the changing sense that a person takes in large measure from the feedback that he or she receives from others.

What a person says about self and situation will, accordingly, change according to the particular construction of reality being negotiated with a particular partner on a particular occasion. 'Self', 'society' and 'career' are words which - like 'marriage' (R.J. Roberts' analogy) - mean different things, to different people, at different stages in their lives, and with different audiences. Moreover, the process of interaction does not only involve the accommodation of the individual to shared constructions in the group; it also involves the accommodation of group constructions to those of the individual. Not only are 'big-picture' sociological categories modified by the constructions they receive in particular communities; the constructions of communities are modified by those of the individuals they comprise.

R.J. Roberts' contribution to thinking about career development comes from a sociological tradition which appears to take more pride in the radical pedigree of its propositions (*vide* the title of Roberts' paper) than in the prior assembly of hard empirical data to support those propositions (cf. Karabel and Halsey, 1977). R.J. Roberts' attack on K. Roberts and on Daws is not primarily based on the evaluation of evidence but upon the quasi-political colour of the positions they adopt: K. Roberts for his implications for compliance with the economic and social *status quo*, Daws for the 'liberal-progressive' hypocrisy of trying to serve two masters.

Nonetheless, what R.J. Roberts is in process of developing bears many valuable marks of a theoretical formulation which can respond to the evidence cited earlier. Four marks are particularly worthy of note. First, it assigns foreground predictive and explanatory significance to the person-to-person exchanges which occur in the day-to-day encounters of an individual's life in family, neighbourhood and community. Second, it bridges the apparently irreconcilable claims of self-concept theory and opportunity-structure theory for career development, showing how material highlighted by both types of theory is incorporated in exchanges negotiated at family, neighbourhood and community level: in this sense, community-interaction theory does not supplant but tends to unify existing theory. Third, it descriptively indicates the means by which self-concept and opportunity structure may modify and be modified in that process of exchange, permitting us to understand the senses in which neither self nor situation are fixed and absolute in their influence upon what people do. Finally, in explanatory and predictive terms it contributes significantly to our understanding of why an individual

may behave differently to other members of the group in which he or she has membership, and why members of a single social class vary so much in the directions and levels of their aspirations and destinations.

parallel theories of guidance

Theories of career development are attempts to describe, explain and predict what happens. Theories of guidance are attempts to think how we might sensibly intervene in what happens. The former is concerned with what is; the latter with what might and should be.

There are scraps of evidence from studies to suggest not only that it is *possible* to represent what happens in community-interaction terms, but that it is *desirable* for students to be encouraged to foster such community interaction in preparing themselves for their futures. For example, Hill (1969) found that although, in general, youngsters tend to become duller and more apathetic as they approach school-leaving, a minority appear to be able to adopt a more purposive, striving posture. Such youngsters, maintains Hill, are necessarily more intelligent or academically-achieving than their peers, nor have they necessarily received more help from teachers or parents. Instead they are characterised by a firm attachment to some activity outside the school. This enables them to arbitrate on their experience from perspectives taken not only from family and school but from contacts made elsewhere in the community - so that, where aspirations suggested by one experience prove unattainable, alternative aspirations are available.

Among other enticing fragments of evidence that the achievement of the future is enhanced by acquisition of a number of perspectives on self and situation, is the evidence of Bazalgette's (1971) Young Adults Resources Project. On the basis of the experience of the project, Bazalgette argues that, in order to gain access to and use of their own authority as adults, young people need opportunities to interact with established adults - who will be able to use their understanding of adulthood-in-the-world in their dealings with the young people - and also opportunities to fulfil adult roles themselves alongside such contacts in the community.

The term that Bazalgette and his colleagues (Reed *et al.*, 1980) have gone on to use to refer to at least part of that loosely-connected web of help and influence is 'network'. They describe an experiment in which individual working people - with the sponsorship of their employers and the agreement of their trade unions - make themselves available as 'working coaches' to a workshop for a small group of unemployed school-leavers. With the help of a support team funded by the Manpower Services Commission, each coach has developed a programme of help for the youngsters, incorporating contacts with local employers, visits and discussion groups. The workshops meet once a week over a period of six months. The central feature of the experiment is the way in which it brings together working people and school leavers. They were formerly 'inhabitants of different worlds, whose values and attitudes to life appeared to be incomprehensible, in many respects, to each other'. The experiment provides an opportunity for them to 'see the world through each other's eyes'.

Reed *et al.* suggest two sorts of gains which the young people can make from such encounters. First, 'as young people and (the leader) become more willing to see the world through each other's eyes, they begin to see new possibilities in the situations they encounter'. In short, the young adults are released from some of the assumptions in which a limited environment, and a limited school curriculum, have entrapped them. They acquire more concrete information about what the world of work means, they learn that there are other ways of interpreting and configuring that information, and their behaviour becomes more exploratory. Having more than the one way of looking

at yourself in the world is the base for personal autonomy (Law, 1981). Second, as they learn to test and change their own assumptions by exposure to the assumptions of others, the young adults become more able to trust and act on the basis of their own feelings. They show less inclination to withdraw from conflict (like victims), more inclination to risk venturing out and to 'take authority for themselves'. They become 'fighters', not least in taking a more active role in searching for job opportunities, and continuing to persist in that search when earlier attempts draw a blank. Personal striving is the apex of personal autonomy (Law, 1981).

The evidence concerning how people receive help from community contacts leads directly to the sorts of conclusions suggested by Hopson and Scally (1978) concerning the need for community-based, paraprofessional help in counselling. Indeed, it leads beyond such conclusions, for it argues the usefulness not only of paraprofessionals but of a wider range of members of the community who would not pretend to any such designation. A community-interaction reading of career development theory suggests that designated guidance practitioners do not have - and should not seek - a corner on guidance. Clients can - and should - get help from people who have no guidance training, credentials or designation for guidance. The help that is available from professionalised and institutionalised practitioners is - and should be - interwoven in the experience of the client with a wide range of other sources of help and influence. For the professionalised and institutionalised practitioner to imagine that somehow he or she can - or should even try to - accept sole responsibility for the guidance of clients would be a bad case of delusions of professional grandeur. The professional, whether he or she plans for it or not, is - and should be - working with others.

pluralistic guidance in an unpredictable society

I argued at the beginning of this paper that thinking about career development is continuously reconfiguring evidence, seeking to resolve problems left by previous generations of theory, and gaining acceptance on the basis of a congruence with the cultural and social context in which it is set. Community-interaction theory does convincingly reconfigure available evidence, and - in particular - helps to resolve problems left by the juxtapositions self-concept and opportunity-structure theory. It can also be argued that it is congruent with many of the preoccupations of our own social and cultural context.

At present, a combination of steeply rising unemployment figures, an accelerating rate of change in the opportunities offered by the labour economy, and an increasing rate of social change and technological development, are all conspiring to thrust on people at least puzzlement, and at worst threat, concerning the future. It is not only that we know that the lives of our youngsters will be different from the lives of their parents: we also know that we do not know in what *ways* those lives will be different. Change has become self-begetting. In changes brought about by wars, floods, recessions and failed harvests, there is the possibility of abatement and recovery time. But many of the changes now occurring in our society are cumulative and irreversible in their effects. This situation is very hard on people who seek simple, abiding and unambiguous solutions to life's problems. Unpredictability is threatening, and the sense of threat is currently diffuse and pervasive. It is reflected, for example, in a mistrust of inaccessible legislative, executive and commercial monoliths which seem to threaten the purity of our living spaces and to erode any residual capacity we may have to influence our individual destinies. It is linked to changes in the labour economy that undermine the basis upon which we have learned to understand our place in society, and that threaten to impose upon us swathes of time off work - time which we are not sure we are going to know what to do with. It is also linked to our sense of the accelerating capacity of science and technology to extend the power of an invisible elite, enabling them to take action possible - intended and unintended - consequences of which terrify our

imaginings. We no longer believe in the inevitability of improvement, or even of survival.

One articulate reaction to the threat is - like that of Schumacher (1973) - to demand the re-structuring of society on a more human scale, and to gain a way of understanding what is happening which is more comprehensible than the macro-statistics of massive and impersonal national and international perspectives, paying more attention to what might be called the 'ecology' of human participation in society. Contemporary preoccupation with ecology nicely symbolises the nature of the reaction. For ecology is the study of habitats, and helps us to understand the ways in which changes within and beyond the boundary of the habitat can radically alter the use that individuals can make of their living space.

A pluralistic network conception of guidance based on a community-interaction theory of career development is highly congruent with such a reaction. It takes account of people's need for a human scale and texture to the nature of the problems they confront. Significantly, Reed *et al.* (1980) specifically draw a parallel between what they are attempting to develop and Schumacher's notion of 'intermediate technology'. Indeed, much of the evidence cited in support of a community-interaction theory of career development could, very readily, be re-stated using the language and concepts of ecology; for - like ecology - it focusses attention on a mid-range of phenomena, broader than the individualistic concepts of psychology-based theories, yet not so impersonally broad as the functionalist sociological theories. Unpublished attempts have already been made by my colleague Eddy Knasel to re-state some of the concepts of career development in terms derived from behavioural ecology.

In a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment it is - extending the ecological metaphor - the capacity of individuals rapidly to regulate, acclimatise and develop their behaviour which will prove to be critical. Accordingly, the call is increasingly for an education service which will help young people to develop the capacity to cope with ambiguity and unpredictability in their futures, to have more than one way of conceiving of possible selves in possible futures, to have the kind of flexibility of mind which is capable of abandoning a useless perspective in favour of useful one, to find a sense of self in a world crowded with conflicting messages. Of the evidence we have examined, that relating to the outcomes of a conception of guidance based on a community-interaction theory of career development - in which a plurality of perspectives can lead to the use by the individual of a range of ways of thinking about possible selves in possible futures - seems to offer the best promise of an appropriate response.

pluralistic guidance in an unpredictable society

Theories of career development stemming from differential, developmental and humanistic psychology suggest 'applied-psychological' roles for the guidance practitioner (Hughes, 1976). The preoccupations of guidance are focussed upon the ways of helping the client internally to use the data of his or her experience. What is external to the client is a 'given', not a central preoccupation. The helper is interested most in how what is going on *inside* the client influences the achievement of his or her life chances, and how it may be changed.

On the other hand, theories of career development stemming from functionalist sociology suggest very little in the way of a role for the guidance practitioner. Indeed, such theories have proved the least fruitful in generating a parallel theory of guidance. K. Roberts counselled the counsellors to cultivate a 'due sense of modesty' concerning what they might be able to do to help their clients break the dies which have been cast for them. Attention is upon the levers in the 'big-picture' system, all of which are *outside*

the range of significant manipulation by the client or his or her helper.

The strength of theories of career development stemming from a community-interaction approach is that they too focus the attention of the practitioner on the world beyond the introspective psychology of the individual, but that they focus on that part of the external world which is proximately in a process of exchange with the individual - in other words, with the sources of expectation, feedback, support, modelling and information which form part of the warp and weft of the client's day-to-day experience. The difference between such mid-range sociological focusses, and those of the 'big-picture' focusses of functionalist sociology, is that the former are more accessible to intervention and change. R.J. Roberts' contention that the constructions of the group are accommodated to those of the individual ('the socialiser is socialised') suggests that the network of help and influence may be changed by its experience. The community-interaction perspective provides guidance practitioners with an accessible theatre and a manageable scenario for 'social change' (Watts and Herr, 1976). and for 'intervention in the system' (Law, 1979) which is short of bloody revolution. It engages the interested attention of the practitioner in what happens beyond the consulting room and the classroom, and in how that world might - in small, organic ways - be changed. Such a theory of guidance casts the practitioner in the role of 'applied sociologist' as well as 'applied psychologist'. Some aspects of such a role have been explored elsewhere (Law, 1980; Watts *et al.*, 1981). Further explorations of the role of guidance practitioner as applied sociologist will appear in a future paper*.

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The 1993 republication commentary on community interaction

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Cambridge; The Careers Research and Advisory Centre, pp. 31-34

Re-reading the 1981 article now, I can see that it was yet another of my greedy attempts to get two birds with one stone! I can also now see that I was ignoring a third already in my hand.

metatheory?

I was trying for what - if I had known the term then - I might have called *metatheory*. It uses a more general explanatory frame for a variety of theories about who-gets-to-do-what.

I have cleaned up this act a bit since then, and now use the diagram in the figure (following page). The diagram tells a story (columns 2-5), beginning with matching and leading to networking techniques. But it also (column 1) links techniques to theories and socio-political considerations. It is a more elegant portrayal of what I set out as *matching*, *humanistic*, and *functionalist* theories in the first few pages of the 1981 article; and it provides a single column for *community interaction* theory. It would, I think, have helped to have put this diagram in the 1981 article - which still explains its structure.

This linking of careers theory, not only to practice but also to socio-political ideas, has been particularly useful in international settings. It helps to explain the more or less consistent way in which, in all societies, guidance work evolves from matching to networking techniques - and, no doubt, beyond.

An important feature of the diagram is that it portrays all the influences of earlier stages as still with us (for example, computer-assisted guidance, and records of achievement and Individual action planning, are - at least in part - implementations of differential theory). It suggests that the four sets of techniques do not supplant one another, but complement each other. The right side of the diagram, therefore, represents guidance work as a series of coalitions between accumulating ideas and actions.

figure
the growing up of careers education and guidance:
coalitions of ideas and actions

1	2	3	4	5
techniques	matching	enabling	coaching	networking
theories	differential	self-concept	structural	interactive
perceptions of society	expanding	problematic	restricted	unpredicted
ideologies	scientific	humanistic	functional	pluralistic

This has implications for teambuilding, which suggested my bravest use of it in the UK. I used the four sets ideas (columns 2-5) as a rationale for the implementation by teachers of pre-vocational programmes - such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (Law, 1986). I cannot say that it has attracted much attention. I take a small comfort from the fact that Bernstein's (1967; 1971) analyses of integrated curriculum in open schools was a much more impressive rationale for TVEI. And, as you know, they speak of little else in the Department of Employment!

new theory

The last dozen-or-so pages of the 1981 article was the product of exasperation with both Ken Roberts' opportunity-structure theory and Peter Daws' use of self-concept theory. I like and admire them both but I did not believe either of their theories. Rob Roberts' 'alternative justification' helped a lot: he was the trail blazer. But - unlike a good many Chicago-school sociologists - I wanted *evidence*. My article was substantially a secondary analysis of other people's evidence. Since then real researchers have found better evidence (notably Collin, 1983; R J Roberts, 1985; Smith, 1986; Young *et al.*, 1988).

In my own staff-development work, one of the most useful features of the 1981 article has been the *expectation-feedback-support-modelling-information* model. I have extended it: it now reads 'models encountered, feedback received, expectations sensed, support received, impressions formed, and contacts made'. In this form it provides a particularly useful framework for understanding experience-based programmes (such as work experience). If work experience can be analysed as (1) being here..., (2) doing this . . . ,

(3) . . . *with Nellie*, then community-interaction theory emphasises what - and how - students gain from 'Nellie'. It suggests that the *encounters* carry the experience-based freight. This has catalysed ideas about how a progressive curriculum can best support experience-based work (Law, 1986^{*}; Law *et al.*, 1991). But its insistence on the importance of the *social* interactive process has been out of kilter with the dominant (libertarian and performance-focused) thinking of the 80s. Maybe that is why it has attracted so little attention.

You will have noticed the irony: my 'metatheory' predicted nothing (well, very little) of what happened during the first ten years after its publication!

better than I knew?

Nonetheless, I hold to the view that career development is usefully thought of in terms of biography - and biography is structured by *encounters*. I now like best the way in which this describes and explains change-of-mind. Being able to see it all another way is the catalyst for creative career development. Rob Roberts was on to this long before me: it was the basis of his 1980 article.

Rob Roberts and I agreed with Ken Roberts that career development is substantially a sociological phenomenon. Career roles are forged within, but also - most significantly - *between*, persons. But we disagreed that role is best thought of as functional compliance. Career roles are forged from both agreement and *disagreement*.

Disagreement thrives on the realisation that there are few (structural and functional) fixed, the-same-for-everybody concepts informing career development. What, to some, might appear objective and unproblematic structures of adult and working life - such as, 'self', 'work', 'wealth', 'male', 'technology' and 'enterprise' - are actually social constructions incapable of supporting any single definition. Different people see things differently. So your definition of any of these terms attaches you to some *social* constituencies more than to others. 'Work' (and all those other words) is, therefore, a social 'ligature': it affords you part of your social identity. But you have 'options' concerning where you attach it in the social web (Dahrendorf, 1979).

More dangerously, 'knowing'-things-differently alters the course of events. Changed thought changes action. Think differently about, say, 'women's work', and you will behave differently. The more varied the people you encounter, the more choice you will have about what to think. Change comes from encountering and exchanging with new people. You can change the attachments: indeed you *will*, as you think and exchange your thoughts a forthcoming article (Law, 1992) indicates how such transactions of agreement and disagreement provide useful bases for workable concepts of autonomy.

All of this has a great deal to do with 'role' - sex-role, work-role, social-role. Sociological concepts of role lie close to the root of much of what we call careers education. It is a useful concept to careers work because it enables us to speak of 'self' and 'situation' in one breath. It relates who gets to do what, at whose behest, and for whose purposes. The notions of 'role' and 'narrative' are - of course - semiologically very close. Career *is* a role narrative - actually a biography.

Community interaction shows how other people's stories give us each a clue to our own.

* Law (1986) was, incidentally, the 'future paper' I promised in 1981. I could not get it into a BJGC article!

I now hold to it because it illuminates the clues which help us oil - black and white, female and male, in inner-city and leafy suburb - to see how *different* our story *might* be ... if that's what we want.

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