



RESEARCH

Playing the Career Game in a Changing World of Work: Career Navigation and Support Strategies in Advice Columns

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This study explores the career challenges individuals are facing and the type of managing strategies proposed on a public arena in Swedish media. The study investigates advice columns published between 2011 and 2015. Qualitative content analysis was used followed by an analysis based on the theoretical framework of career as a social and professional representation. The results uncovered several dilemmas of career navigation. These dilemmas were classified into five categories: 1) *need for recognition*, 2) *how to advance*, 3) *how to understand the labor market*, 4) *experiences of injustice and of being controlled*, and 5) *uncertainty in current/forthcoming role*. In all categories the social representation of *career as a game of exchange* is evident. The study identified four different support strategies in the answers given: 1) *a strengthening strategy*; 2) *an enduring strategy*; 3) *a compensating strategy*, and 4) *a balancing strategy*. These strategies relate to four different orientations: 1) *individual-oriented*, 2) *market-oriented*, 3) *organizational-oriented*, and 4) *mutual-oriented*. Moreover, four work-life contextually related representations were identified as underlying the answers given: 1) *career-recognition as a cost issue*, *career-navigating as 2) a risky (power)game*, as 3) *understanding the rules of the game*, and 4) *as personal marketing and/or strategic communication*. Based upon the results, a *bridging guidance approach* is suggested that manages to address a perspective of exchange and through increased awareness manages to build bridges between different knowledge bases about career to support learning in career navigation.

Keywords: Career navigation; support strategies; advice columns; social representations; bridging guidance

Denna studie undersöker karriärfrågor och utmaningar som individer står inför samt vilken typ av hanteringsstrategier som föreslås på en offentlig arena i svensk media. Studien undersöker rådgivningskolumner publicerade mellan 2011 och 2015. Kvalitativ innehållsanalys genomfördes följt av en analys baserad på det teoretiska ramverket karriär som social och professionell representation. Resultaten blottade ett antal dilemman avseende karriärnavigering. Dessa dilemman klassificerades i fem kategorier: 1) *behov av erkännande*, 2) *hur avancera/gå vidare*, 3) *hur förstå arbetsmarknaden*, 4) *upplevelser av orättvisa och kontroll*, och 5) *osäkerhet i nuvarande/kommande roll*. I samtliga kategorier framträder den sociala representationen om karriär som ett utbyttspel. Studien identifierade fyra olika stödstrategier i kolumnernas svar: 1) *stärkande strategi*, 2) *uthärdande strategi*, 3) *kompenserande strategi*, och 4) *balanserande strategi*. Dessa strategier relaterar till fyra olika orienteringar: 1) *individorienterad*, 2) *marknadsorienterad*, 3) *organisationsorienterad* och 4) *ömsesidig orientering*. Vidare identifierades fyra arbetslivsrelaterade kontextbundna representationer om karriär som underliggande de givna svaren; 1) *karriär-erkännande som kostnadsfråga*, *karriär-navigering som 2) ett riskabelt (makt) spel*, 3) *som förståelse av spelets regler*, och 4) *som personlig marknadsföring/strategisk kommunikation*. Baserat på studiens resultat föreslås en *överbryggande vägledningsstrategi* som förmår hantera ett utbytesperspektiv på karriär och genom ökad medvetenhet bygga broar mellan olika kunskapsbaser om karriär för att stödja lärande i karriärnavigering.

Nyckelord: karriärnavigering; stödstrategier; rådgivningskolumner; sociala representationer; överbryggande vägledning

Introduction

Over time the concept 'career' has undergone several redefinitions and redesigns. Concurrent with changes in employment patterns, the traditional understanding of career as the process of 'climbing the ladder' (see Savickas, 2008) has been challenged. Having been eroded as a result of career transformations and relegated to the past (Hall & Mirvis, 1996), this previous 'taken-for-granted' meaning has been replaced by new meanings and conceptions (Baruch, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The public's everyday understanding of career is, however, still anchored in past working-life conditions, even as individuals are finding their own careers to be more and more unpredictable (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013). Today the population still holds a deeply rooted conception of career that embodies both the notion of 'climbing upwards' and the idea of career having 'personal and social' meanings. This is despite the transformation in the career field towards new conceptions. At the same time, the 'climbing upwards' notion has proven to be somewhat uneasily assumed in the Nordic countries, both by the public and among professionals (Bakke Bardsdotter, 2020; Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). Previous studies (e.g. Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015) show that in the Swedish context professionals within the career-guidance counselling community hold an *uneasy relationship to the concept of career*. Such professionals commonly contest the hierarchical meaning of career and instead regard it as *personal growth and life development*. This resistance towards the traditional, hierarchical meaning of career is also evident among researchers in the Nordic career guidance field (Hagaseth Haug, Hooley, Kettunen, & Thomsen, 2020). Moreover, guiding the public's conception of career (also evident among groups within professional communities) is the underlying mindset that views *career as a game of exchange*, (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013; Hirsh & Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018), i.e., the expectations that particular efforts should result in particular rewards of both an internal and external character. Such rewards clearly relate to the consequences and outcomes of (as historically conceptualized) *subjective success* versus *objective success* within the career field (Spurk & Hirschi, 2019).

Tremendous changes have occurred in the world of work during the most recent decades. Globalization trends and the gradual transition towards a knowledge-based economy have created uncertainty in the world of work and individuals have seen their career expectations and possibilities challenged.

In the early 2000s, it became evident that the public seemed especially troubled by many types of career issues, as evidenced by the increased attention paid to career dilemmas and career advice in Swedish public media forums. Even though there is an extensive knowledge and literature available within the research fields of career and guidance counselling, the expansion of such career advice columns calls for a deeper exploration to understand what is going on. Even though the research field of career and the research field of guidance counselling share a common interest in the same object, i.e., career, these fields of research are often treated separately. Recent explorations of major career concepts and models of careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), in which boundaryless and protean concepts have dominated the research for the past decade, have been followed by the rise of the next generation of career concepts, such as *integrative frameworks* (which represent attempts to combine protean and boundaryless ideas), *hybrid careers* (in which careers contain elements of both a traditional and non-traditional character) and *kaleidoscope careers* (which recognize that career-focus changes over time). For a deeper review of these concepts see, for example, Sullivan & Baruch, 2009. Despite these explorations, confusion still exists in knowing how to understand, navigate, and support careers in contemporary society. Even though a transition from traditional view of career towards that of nonlinear, discontinuous career has been observed (Sullivan, 1999), individuals are still involved in different types of careers that include both traditional and nontraditional elements (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In addition, the motivations for career transitions have been proven to involve aspirations for both internal and external outcomes and rewards (Chudzikowski et al. 2009). However, in the career literature the public's own experiences and conceptions of career are given little voice. Furthermore, previous literature reviews have noted that most of what is known about career is based on studies conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Clearly, this indicates that further exploration of careers in the Nordic countries is needed. It becomes especially important to have a better understanding of how different types of career struggles are experienced and communicated by the public and how these are handled in a public mass-media arena in the Swedish context.

Background

The research field of career is broad and multifaceted, and career has for long been understood and interpreted differently depending on both discipline and context (Collin, 2007). A *lack of conceptual clarity* is therefore not surprising since the knowledge of career is scientifically developed within two separate research fields: 1) the career guidance and counselling field and 2) the field of careers within organizations, businesses, and management. So, the question arises: Why does it seem to be more important than ever, to find some kind of clarification on how to understand and approach career in our contemporary society, both among the public and among professionals working with career as an object? There are several reasons for this, besides the previously acknowledged lack of conceptual clarity. The world of work has experienced several changes, among them has been a *conceptual change* in which the traditional understanding of career has been transformed into new meanings. Utilizing Moscovici's (2001) reasoning about how everyday knowledge of certain phenomena becomes taken-for-granted knowledge, it is clear that *conceptual change* is challenging. People's everyday knowledge about such an abstract, multifaceted social phenomena as career is especially challenged in times of upheaval and societal changes when they are confronted with new ways of communicating about career and changed practices of career. What was earlier seen as familiar, suddenly becomes unfamiliar to the public, social groups, and professional groups concerned with career. Furthermore, it is important to note the connection between changes in the world of work and how these changes influence the career guidance community as well.

During the past decade career has specially been subject to change and a range of new buzzwords have been popularized to characterize careers. These buzzwords, such as *change*, *flexibility*, *mobility*, *adaptation*, and *employability*, are in response to an environment where individuals need continuously to educate themselves, readjust their plans, and adapt to changing conditions. This has particularly been noted in studies exploring the content of European policies concerning education, labor market, and career guidance policies (Fejes, Olson, Rahm, Dahlstedt, & Sandberg, 2016; Bengtsson, 2016). A global competitive economic and knowledge-based society has in recent decades resulted in formulations of new career conceptions, such as 'boundaryless careers' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), 'protean careers' (Hall & Mirvis, 1996), and metaphors such as 'career as resource' (Inkson, 2004). Efforts to reformulate career into new meanings, beyond the traditional meaning of career as 'climbing the ladder', can be regarded as strategies to make career better fit within a changing society and the resultant changing work conditions (Inkson, 2004). As predictability and stability decreased, these new ways of conceptualizing careers have gained major influence. (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Moreover, these concepts reflect an increasingly ambiguous employer-employee relationship (Granrose & Baccili, 2006). New ways of speaking about working life, such as *talent management* (Claussen, Grohsjean, Luger, & Probst, 2014), and career practice have followed. These changes correspond to the development and emphasis of HRM strategies in which a shift in rhetoric at a structural level ensued. An emphasis on individuals' own responsibilities for keeping themselves competent, flexible, adaptable, and employable is clearly evident in European policies (Fejes et al. 2016). The rhetoric in such policies aligns with the protean and boundaryless career conceptions that emphasize a belief in continuous learning, the search for intrinsic rewards in particular, and the belief in people taking responsibility for managing their own careers (Mirvis & Hall, 1994). However, as noted by Sullivan and Baruch (2009), the tendency among scholars to emphasize nontraditional career paths, continuous learning, and the search for mainly *intrinsic rewards* might have caused a shift from one extreme to another. The earlier employer-employee relationship has become blurred with increased ambiguity and uncertainty for human resource management (Baruch, 2004). Such shift in the division of responsibility might also result in an imbalance in the relationship resulting in an unfair division of demands as well as confusion for employees concerning how careers are promoted at work-places (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). According to Holbeche (2017), the shift towards HRM (human resource management) reflected the goal of making cost-effective the use of human resources. However, critical approaches also argued that mainstream HRM became a neoliberal overall-framework for disciplining and governing the workforce in order for HRM functions to assist business in achieving labor flexibility and reducing workforce costs (Dundon & Rafferty, 2018; Townley, 1998). Moreover, increasing social injustice has accompanied the dominance of neoliberal principles in contemporary societies (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018).

The shift in the terminology and practice of careers toward adopting the concept of *talent management* (Claussen et al, 2014) within the area of business and organizations calls for further attention as it embodies a specific focus that regards career development as something reserved for those with specific talents of relevance for certain key positions. The practices of talent management further necessitate paying attention to the underlying philosophies of talent management and the implications they may have on the way

career is communicated. Meyers and van Woerkom (2014) highlight tensions arising concerning whether talent management is an inclusive or exclusive task or whether talent is stable or developable. Moreover, in recent years factors such as social injustice in the workplace (van Dijke & De Cremer, 2016), uncertainty in the employability relationship, and concerns over age discrimination (Russo et al, 2020) have emerged as challenging areas with implications for career supportive practices. Also, the increasing practice of using testing in recruitment processes, where assessment seems to have become an end in itself (Stobart, 2008), has implications for the understanding of transitions and opportunities for employees to establish themselves in different working contexts as part of a career path. As illustrated above, conceptual change that effects the meaning of career has occurred in the world of work. Furthermore, these changes, dealing with how to communicate and practice career in the world of work, most certainly will influence ordinary people in their working life.

Yet another reason for some clarification of how to approach career is the fact it is not as easy to keep the different research fields on careers separated anymore. Earlier pathways and transitions from education to working life were assumed to proceed in a stable sequence of predictable structural breaking points (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) but nowadays it appears to proceed in a continuous sequence of change. Career activities earlier could be sorted as belonging either to educational and vocational choice or to career development in businesses and organizations. Today these two elements have become increasingly intertwined as people move in and out of educational institutions and systems, and in and out of employment, and between workplaces and within workplaces. Given this, career has become a *shared object* between several different parties involved (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). It is through people's career paths that the earlier-separated two knowledge fields of career becomes increasingly intertwined with each other and that they will 'meet' with their different understandings of how to approach career through an individual's career transitions. Studies exploring the meaning of career among different parties (structural policies, ordinary people in working life, career guidance professionals) that are involved in the shared object of career (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018) illuminate how different groups shape their own understanding of career, depending on their role and position in the world of work. This would mean that the understanding of career in today's complex world of work has become even more blurred between *etic* (expert knowledge) and *emic* (popular knowledge) conceptualizations (Berry, 1969), and *between scientifically formed knowledge and socially formed common-sense knowledge* (Moscovici, 2001). Thus, there are at least three different perspectives circulating: 1) the professionally expert-formed knowledge and scientifically-formed knowledge about career within the career guidance and counselling community, 2) the professionally expert-formed knowledge and scientifically-formed knowledge about career within the field of organizations, business and management, and 3) the taken-for-granted everyday knowledge/common-sense knowledge about career among the public.

Given the above, and given that the public's own experiences and conceptions of career are given little voice in career literature, this study addresses two issues: 1) career questions with which people are struggling and 2) the kind of advice and support offered in publicly published advice columns in a Swedish media context. This approach is assumed to contribute to uncovering patterns of both *etic* and *emic* knowledge (Berry, 1969) of career, of both scientifically and professionally formed knowledge within the expert field of career and taken-for granted knowledge of career among the public in different contexts (Moscovici, 2001; Ratinaud & Lac, 2011; Jovchelovitch, 2007).

Purpose

The study examined questions/answers published on a public arena in advice columns in Swedish media between 2011 and 2015. It aimed to identify the type of career struggles for which people are searching support and to examine the underlying ideas of career. Additionally, the study seeks to explore what strategies are used to support the questioners in the answers given and to disclose the underlying thoughts and ideas of career guiding the answers. Finally, the aim is to analyze how those career struggles, proffered answers, and underlying thoughts of career (found within the questions and the answers) relate to different perspectives about career in contemporary working life. The following questions were posed:

- 1) *What kind of career struggles do people express and search support for in advice columns in Swedish media?*
- 2) *What underlying thoughts and ideas of career can be found in the expressed issues?*
- 3) *What kind of strategies are used in the answers/advices given?*
- 4) *What underlying thoughts and ideas of career seem to guide the answers, and how do these thoughts and ideas relate to the different perspectives of career in contemporary working life?*

Theoretical and methodological approaches

To understand the public's taken-for-granted thinking on careers as well as that of professionals working with career issues, career guidance, advice and career support, this study applies the theoretical and analytical framework of *career as a social and professional representation* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015), based upon the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 2001; Ratinaud & Lac, 2011). Such approach is assumed to capture both etic and emic knowledge (Berry, 1969), both common-sense knowledge, and professionally, contextually and/or scientifically formed knowledge (Moscovici, 2001; Ratinaud & Lac, 2011; Jovchelovitch, 2007) expressed by representatives of career as a specific knowledge field. Career as social and professional representations imply that the meaning ascribed to career depends on systems of values, ideas, and practices that enable society and certain groups or communities of professionals to establish an order for orientating within this realm. This system of values, ideas, and practices provides individuals and particular groups with certain commonly shared codes for interpreting, translating, and communicating our understanding of career. The framework of career as *social representation* and as *professional representation* regards career phenomena as consisting of socialized expressions that organize ways for people to communicate about career with support from images, language, symbols, and codes. In turn, these represent, symbolize, and identify actions and situations that are common knowledge and are taken-for-granted, particularly among certain groups of people. In social representation theory the significance of communicative processes is emphasized as being crucial to the creation of our everyday knowledge about a certain phenomenon (Moscovici, 2001). Thus, it is through communication that social representations of career come into being, irrespective of whether communication occurs through conversations, through the acts of people, or by mass media, and it is through communication that underlying thinking is revealed. In this regard, each formation of a discourse is preceded by a social and/or professional representation of a certain phenomenon. Discourses thus both begin in and contribute to the shaping of social representation. It is in times of change that taken-for-granted knowledge, formed within groups or communities, becomes particularly challenged and visible (Moscovici, 2001). Therefore, *conceptual change*, and changing ways of communicating and practicing careers is assumed to reveal underlying perspectives of career among different groups in different contexts.

Three different perspectives have been identified as framing the shared object of career in today's complex working life; 1) *organizational and business needs, purposes, and goals*, 2) *people's everyday knowledge*, and 3) *the professional career guidance community* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). These were identified based on social representations theory (Moscovici, 2001) and further developed into the theoretical and analytical framework of *career as social and professional representation* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015) in which such representations are socially and culturally formed within each specific social group or professional field. These groups or fields (Bourdieu, 1990) shape different discourses and logics about how career is communicated. From the first perspective, career is communicated as *a strategy, a resource, and a means of achieving organizational goals*. From the second perspective, career is communicated as *a game of exchange*, an interplay between personal and social meanings of career, where the first refers to the social representation of career as an 'individual project and self-realization' and the second refers to career more in terms of career as 'social/hierarchical climbing' (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013, p. 14). Moreover, *career from an exchange perspective* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018) reveals a reciprocation between internal/experienced rewards/outcomes, such as personal values and satisfaction, and external/observable rewards/outcomes, such as salaries, position, and status. From the third perspective, career is communicated as *personal growth and life development* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). These different perspectives arise as knowledge formed in specific, different contexts (Jovchelovitch, 2007), such as the context of *working life*, the context of business and management, and the context of guidance practice. The research field of career is divided between researchers focusing on careers within working life, business, and organization and those researchers focusing on career choice and development within mainly the educational sector. Consequently, different professional and scientific knowledges of career emerge as a consequence of context. However, these knowledge fields both represent an expertise, defined as *etic* knowledge (Berry, 1969), and also considered as *scientific knowledge* (Moscovici, 2001), even though because of their belonging to different communities they have different perspectives on the same object. Knowledge among the public arises in the contexts of which people are a part and in which they, by experience and communication, form a *common-sense knowledge* (Moscovici, 2001; Jovchelovitch, 2007), also understood as *emic*, popular knowledge (Berry, 1969).

Data collection

To uncover underlying thoughts and ideas that precede a communicative action requires methods (Abric, 1995) that manage to capture spontaneous, taken-for-granted expressions of both etic and emic character

(Berry, 1969), as communicated through underlying representations of a phenomena (Moscovici, 2001), in this case social and professional representations of career (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). Such patterns are not easily disclosed in studies based on survey or interview designs, given that these designs entail risks of respondents trying to answer in ways they believe is correct or in alignment with expected answers (Abric, 1995). Therefore, this study pays attention to written, publicly available media texts. The study's raw data was based on career questions and answers occurring in advice columns publicly available and published in Swedish media between the years 2011 and 2015. This data was identified and downloaded after a search procedure in the Retriever Database. The search procedure applied a combination of search concepts, namely, 'daily news' and 'career counselor'. The initial search resulted in 111 hits, and the time delimitation was set between January 2011 and August 2015 with the search procedure carried out on August 17, 2015. Numbers of hits for each year are presented in **Table 1**, below.

A total of 111 columns were downloaded and read in order to scrutinize their relevance for the study, resulting in 12 of the columns being excluded. Altogether 99 published columns were included in the textual material for analysis. These columns were then divided into 99 text units of questions and 99 text units of answers. The material for analysis is publicly available text-material in mass media. Ethical considerations have been made in the production of the text. Given the character of the columns, personal information of the questioners has already been de-identified by the submitter through the anonymous signature. The answers given are communicated under a general signature. Senders behind the columns occur in data to varying degrees. In cases where any personal or identifiable information has been noted, this has been de-identified in the production of the text. The aim is rather to disclose how career issues are communicated through written text in mass media on a public arena than investigating selected respondents. However, the advices are assumed to be communicated by representatives of experts of the knowledge fields of career and career counselling. With regards to the study's credibility and reliability (Creswell, 2009), the preliminary results of analysis have been discussed with both research colleagues and practitioners within the career guidance and counselling field. Such processes have served as critical tools in the process of clarifying and strengthening transparency and procedures.

Analysis of data

Exploring communicative actions in media texts, textual analysis of various documents is a well-known approach in studies on abstract, social phenomena involving latent or implicit knowledge and the underlying representations among various social and professional groups and which are communicated in written texts (Moscovici, 2008). Such studies often apply a qualitative content analysis approach (Moscovici, 2001). The analysis of data is based upon qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) with an initial inductive approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to minimize the risk of subjective interpretation and keep close to what is evident in data.

This study sees advice columns as expressions of people's communicative actions in which a person's thinking about a certain object (here career-related troubles) occurs in a public arena (Moscovici, 2001). The questions as formulated (99 units of text) are regarded as extracts of communicative actions, which are further based upon people's underlying thinking – social representations – of careers (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). Likewise, it is assumed that the answers given (99 units of text) are communicative actions, based upon underlying assumptions that constitute an etic knowledge (Berry 1969), and expert knowledge acquired through scientifically, professionally (Moscovici, 2001, Ratinaud & Lac 2011), and contextually (Jovchelowitch, 2007) formed representations of career carried by the senders behind the formulated answers.

Table 1: Results of the search procedure.

Year	Numbers of hits
2015	26
2014	44
2013	17
2012	5
2011	17
Total	111

To obtain an overall understanding of the collected data from an inductive approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), each text was first read with a focus on the questions asked and thereafter focused on the answers given. Based upon the structured way of conducting qualitative content analysis, suggested by Graneheim & Lundman (2004), the expressions (regarded as the meaning units) were condensed, coded, and sorted in categories. The condensed and coded meaning units with same/similar content were brought together and resulted for this first section in the development of five categories of questions asked that were then classified into one encompassing theme of career struggles. The resultant categories and the overall theme of the questions asked are presented in **Table 2**.

Concentrating on the answers given, the study sought to identify the content of the written answers by addressing questions towards the text units (see Wallengren, Segesten, & Friberg, 2010). The following questions were addressed towards the text units: *What characterizes the support in answers/advices given? Whose*

Table 2: Examples of expressions, resulting categories and theme of questions asked, in advice columns in Swedish media between the years 2011–2015.

Content analysis of questions asked

Examples of expressions	Category	Theme
"I work as a middle-leader/.../I have received positive feedback in terms of "we wouldn't survive without you". The managers want me to work more and take more responsibility for parts that my boss is incapable of. I have the capacity but I am fed up with the situation. I approved, but also mentioned I wanted to discuss my salary. My HR-manager advised me not to speak about salary. I already work beyond my area of responsibilities. It is not motivating taking more responsibility without increased salary" (F0412Q)	<i>Need for recognition</i>	
"Would like to develop myself further in the company but the silent rule says that possibilities for advancement only exist if you have been included in the company's pool of talent. Realize the chances to be included decrease as time goes by. Have always been ambitious but never felt recognized by my nearest boss. Feel I am losing my spark..." (E0302Q)	<i>How to advance?</i>	
"How do you get an entry job? I have never had a real job. Have a background as a student, a newspaper distributor, telemarketer and dishwasher. Three years ago I started studying again/.../I have a bachelor's and master's degree from one of Sweden's highest-ranked universities. Have searched for jobs without result. Wonder if I am too old, or am I being judged by previous employments?/.../How do I get that experience employers demand for? Am I facing more difficulties because of my foreign name?" (E1026Q)	<i>How to understand the labor market?</i>	Changed rules, experiences of uncertainty and injustice
"I am controlled and monitored in every single detail. The boss is lecturing me in front of others. In the next second, he tells me to continue to think new". (D1103Q)	<i>Experiences of injustice and of being controlled</i>	
"I have been tested by a psychologist for a potential new job in another firm./.../The meeting with the psychologist was not good, he interpreted my profile in a way I don't feel familiar with./...I have met the person responsible for the recruitment several times, and these meetings have felt good./.../I am worried the test will have too much influence on the decision" (E0608Q).		
"I have been offered and said yes to my dream job – a managerial job/.../I have received attention for my new role, and everybody congratulates me. When I got this opportunity, I spoke with my husband who said it is my decision. However, he also noted that you never know if a similar opportunity will come. And if I say no, they might be thinking I am not interested in further development. However, when I had a first meeting with my staff, I felt this is the wrong job for me. I got a stomach ache and realized that I'm not feeling well in this new managerial role" (D1020Q)	<i>Uncertainty in current/forthcoming role</i>	

needs are addressed in the answers/advices given? The first step revealed four career supportive strategies found in a mixture of the answers given. The second step of analysis of these different career supportive strategies also revealed four different orientations towards the strategies. The strategies and orientations are illustrated in **Figure 1**.

In the following section, the results of the initial qualitative content analysis are presented, using the categories and theme presented above (**Table 2**) as subheadings, and then further analyzed. After each section is an exploration of the extracts in each category and thereby allowing for a search for the major underlying thoughts, ideas, and perspectives on career that are seen both in questions asked and answers given. The analytical process of the questions revealed conceptual expressions relating to social representations of career that guide and bound people's mindsets vis-à-vis their career dilemmas. The analytical process, focusing on the answers given, revealed four underlying work-life contextually related representations as being part of a contextually situated knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2007) and can be understood in relation to *what phase of career, what context of the career dilemma* that is in focus in the questions asked. Besides these contextually related representations, the professional representation of career as personal growth and life-development (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015) which earlier was identified as shared professional knowledge within the guidance community, appears in some of the answers. The expressed career struggles and the support provided in the columns are interpreted and discussed in relation to the difficulties in understanding and approaching career in our contemporary, global society.

Results

Changed rules, uncertainty, and experiences of injustice

Need for recognition

It is evident that in their daily lives people are troubled with feelings of not being recognized. They express needs for acknowledgment and appreciation. Several examples are clearly concerned with feelings of being betrayed by the company. For instance, one support-seeking person (E1214Q) professed that over several years the employer has promised competence development, higher salary, and more responsibility, yet had not fulfilled any of these promises. This individual is losing all trust in this workplace and is preparing to seek new jobs. Yet another example (E0831Q) expresses frustration in that she is not recognized in the same way as her male colleagues, even though she delivers better results than they do. Another example (E1214Q) discloses a story from a person who had been promised advancement but instead the boss hired a best friend and the support-seeking person now struggles with feelings of being betrayed and degraded. Another story (D0929Q) tells us about a person working as an assistant, but clearly is the one who carries most of the responsibility but is not recognized. This employee is the "shadow behind, the boss" and thus ensures that the boss' job is well-managed, yet no one is aware that this employee is the one behind all the successful work. Currently, this employee is struggling with whether to stay or move on, and finally receive the deserved recognition for the work performed. The stories go on with similar themes. Another example (D1110Q) expresses feelings of not being fairly treated after having delivered a well-performed work, without any appreciation or recognition. One story (E0126Q) from an employee discloses how the new boss provides no support; consequently, the employee is beginning to wither. There are also stories from people who feel they have more to give, but they are not given opportunities to show or use their competence. For instance, one example (B1016Q) discloses how a woman struggles to make the best use of her competencies and be treated justly but has become unsure about her own capability. Several stories (B0914Q, F0816Q, F0412Q) are concerned with disappointments after not being compensated through a higher salary, appreciation, or recognition for a job with more responsibility. These stories are concerned with the issue of responsibilities, such as seen in the story (E0119Q) in which a confusion concerning responsibilities between the support-seeking person and the boss is disclosed.

How to advance?

A number of examples highlight peoples' ambitions and aspirations to advance. Some examples distinctly express aspirations towards higher positions. Others express desires to have further advancement or to leave the present job. One example (B1023Q) would like to quit the current job but is unsure if any other job possibilities exist for him because of his age (over 50 years old) and is unsure how to act in order to be considered in such a competitive climate. Another example (B1106Q) comes from a teacher who is tired of the lack of career opportunities and a low salary. The main part of the job consists of administration and the person is confused about how to move to another industry where pedagogical issues are of importance. Another example (B1113Q) comes from a leader who would like to move to another sector but continue as

a boss. Several stories disclose feelings of being trapped. There are also examples of women who are highly educated and are trying to advance into positions of leadership (F0311Q). One example (E0413Q) describes a person who has ambitions and definitely wants to advance but realizes that to advance in this company there is the “silent rule” – advancement can only occur when a person is included within the pool for talents. Hence, this employee struggles with feelings of not being noticed, recognized or confirmed and is about to be so discouraged as to consider resigning. Yet another example (E0302Q) comes from an immigrant woman who is highly educated, with academic qualifications, yet who struggles with feelings of being hindered on several levels. She describes herself as a strong woman, with potential, and she feels she have much to give. She has ambitions and aspirations to become a director but does not understand why she cannot advance.

How to understand the labor market?

Several stories are concerned with issues of how to handle and understand the conditions of the labor market. For instance, one story (E0601Q) discloses worries about not being attractive enough for the labor market and worries about how to maintain competence and ensure employability. The position the person holds at present seems to contain risks for stagnation. Another story (B1204Q) is also concerned with how to be prepared for change, for a recession, and the increased pressure on the labor market. The importance of how one appears in the eyes of the others also is a concern highlighted in other stories (E1012Q) in which the working culture is characterized by being too competitive and the questioner wants to leave but is afraid to be regarded as a failure. Another example touches on the same theme (E1116Q), but with a focus on the desire not to work full time, as commuting is exhausting, despite flexible working conditions. Other questions are concerned with how to enter the labor market (E1026Q), how to behave when seeking a new job (E0914Q), and how to handle the new methods of seeking jobs through social media (C0108Q). In some stories feelings of inadequacy are revealed. These stories express feelings of not being “good enough” and concerns about how to cope with mistakes already made.

Experiences of injustice and of being controlled

Several examples are concerned with experiences of being controlled by bosses (D1013Q; D1006A) and with also feelings of being unfairly treated by superiors at workplaces. For instance, (F0510Q) recounts how the boss, in front of other colleagues and co-workers, would humiliate an employee. Such incidents were reported as occurring in meetings and also while the person was presenting information to customers. Undoubtedly, such behavior from the boss causes feelings of insecurity. Another example (F0419Q) is how the support-seeking person is troubled by the actions of both co-workers and the boss towards a colleague. The text illustrates how the boss undercuts the colleague, thus legitimizing inappropriate behavior, and furthermore has revealed confidential information about an employee. Yet another example (E1102Q) describes the boss as being unpredictable, intimidating, and giving double messages. When the questioner and colleagues try to ask for clarifications, the boss becomes angry and accuses them of challenging authority. Other examples concern managers’ behaviors and disclose troubles with bosses who are controlling and demanding (F0329Q). Other stories highlight experiences of injustice at the recruitment stage. For instance, questions (E0608Q, E0223Q) highlight worries about whether results from recruitment tests were interpreted fairly and justly. Similarly, also evident were experiences of being fooled by promises, made by the bosses, that no longer can be fulfilled due to reorganizations (D1201Q; B1201Q).

Uncertainty in current/forthcoming role

Several examples are concerned with feelings and troubles experienced in the transitional state towards new positions. Such examples reveal stories from people who have accepted a higher position and the resultant pressure from superiors to increase profitability or solve group problems where others before them have failed. For instance, (F0426Q) expresses being troubled about how to manage and succeed in a company if the job itself is a “mission impossible”. Another example (E0316Q) discloses a dilemma where the employee is on track towards a position with higher responsibility for leading a group, yet the group questions the individual’s competence to do so and is testing the persons’ capacity to lead. Other questions are concerned with how to handle mentorship, and these come from both sides – both from mentors and mentees. For instance, those who act as mentors (E0824Q, E0330Q) are frustrated since the mentorship takes too much of their time. The stories from those who have been given a mentor (D1117Q, B0907Q) disclose an uncertainty in how to behave and sometimes do not feel in need of a mentor. Another story (F0201Q) comes from a mother who worries about her daughter who needs support and help at her work to be able to handle stress, demands, criticism, and relationships.

Summary of dominating underlying representations of career

Throughout these texts, it is evident that people relate their thinking of career based upon a social representation of career as hierarchical, upwards climbing rooted in the traditional view of career (see Savickas, 2008). This is especially apparent in the categories of *how to advance* and *uncertainty in current/forthcoming role*. In all categories the social representation of career as being *a game of exchange* (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) is evident. In the categories *need for recognition* and *experiences of injustice and control* it is clear the exchange between the individual and the employing organization is an imbalanced condition. The category of *how to understand the labor market*, also reveals an uncertainty regarding how to play the game to reach the expected exchange.

A mixture of career supportive strategies in the answers given

The answers given to the questions reveal different approaches to handling career struggles. A mixture of four career supportive strategies emerged throughout the answers given: *strengthening strategy*, *compensating strategy*, *enduring strategy*, and *balancing strategy*. Depending on the character of the questions asked, some parts of the textual units analyzed can be sorted into one category while another part of the textual units can be sorted into another category (see B1016Q, for instance). This shows the complexity embedded in the questions and the need for applying several different strategies in the advice given to handle such complexity. In **Table 3**, examples of categories of questions and the mixture of strategies and orientations used are provided. The connection between the questions and the advice given reveals that complexity needs to be handled by complexity rather than one single approach or orientation.

The *strengthening strategy* is characterized by a focus on empowering the questioners, by addressing (based on what was disclosed in the question) to draw upon their abilities, experiences, and as well as potentials for personal growth and learning. The *compensating strategy* is characterized by trying to compensate and assess what seems to be an imbalanced, or unequal situation by focusing on facts that might be of benefit to the questioner. The *enduring strategy* is characterized by a focus on the questioners need to cope with the circumstances and to learn how to adapt and/or accept them. The *balancing strategy* attempts to explain to the questioner how the other side of the relationship functions, regardless of whether it is the labor market in general or the organization, a potential employer, or a present boss in particular who is the other party concerned.

Table 3: Examples of categories of questions, and strategies and orientations used in the answers given.

Category of questions asked	Examples of coded expressions	Strategies used in answers given	Orientations used in answers given
Need for recognition	B1016Q	Strengthening, balancing (B1016A)	<i>Individual-oriented, market-oriented, organizational-oriented</i>
	F0412Q	Strengthening balancing enduring (F0412A)	Balancing between being <i>individual-oriented</i> and <i>organizational-oriented</i>
How to advance?	B1023Q	Strengthening, compensating (B1023A)	<i>Mutual-oriented</i>
	E0413Q	Balancing (E0413A)	
How to understand the labor market?	E1026Q	Strengthening, balancing, compensating and enduring (E1026A)	<i>Individual-oriented, market-oriented</i>
	C0108Q B1016Q	Strengthening, balancing (C0108A;B1016A)	<i>Individual-oriented, market-oriented, organizational-oriented</i>
Experiences of injustice and of being controlled	D1013Q D1006Q	Enduring, balancing strategy (D1013A; D1006A)	Balancing between being <i>individual-oriented</i> and <i>organizational-oriented</i>
	Uncertainty in current/forthcoming role	F0426Q E0316Q	Balancing, strengthening (F0426A) Balancing strategy, strengthening (E0316A)

Enduring strategy mixed with balancing strategy

In an example from questions concerned with experiences of being controlled by bosses (D1013Q), the questioner wonders if she should speak with her superior boss about her feelings of being controlled by her new administrative leader. The answer discloses a combination of an *enduring strategy* and a *balancing strategy*, and balances between being individual-oriented and organizational-oriented.

“I would not recommend you speak with your superior boss. He is the one who hired your new administrative leader. He must give her a chance when problems arise. Therefore, he will most likely turn to her and tell her what you have said and encourage her to speak with you to find a solution. Since you have failed in your efforts to speak with her, it is risky. She would most certainly be angry with you and think you are disloyal and untrustworthy. Gossiping with the superior boss. You depend on good relations with your boss for future employments and references. It is wiser to endure, have patience, do a good job where you are, and start searching new jobs” (D1013A).

There are similar examples of questions in which the answers given are characterized by the same combination of strategies – the questioners are recommended to keep a low profile, endure, do a good job, and prepare themselves to leave (D1006A; D0915A).

Strengthening strategy, mixed with balancing and enduring strategy

In response to questions dealing with feelings of disappointments, not being recognized, or not being valued by increased salary even though they have received increased responsibilities, and sometimes only being compensated by being “flattered” into accepting work beyond their area of responsibilities (F0412Q; F0816Q), there is a mixture of strategies used. These answers are also balanced between being individual-oriented and/or organizational-oriented. Some responses explain the organizational perspective to the questioner with expressions thusly (F0412A): “Fast-growing entrepreneurial companies need money to grow, and the right staff. It is expensive to expand. This is probably the reason why the HR-manager flatters you and insinuates that if you are only interested in money you send the wrong signals if you want to take more responsibility in the company. They want to pay as little as possible.” In others, the answer shifts to a *strengthening strategy*; “You are absolutely correct. Salary and compensation are important.” Still others are offered an *enduring strategy* (F0412A): “Answer the HR manager that you are willing to work more, but salary is important for your decision. See how they react. Endure and wait. They are in an emergency. Either they treat you fair, or if not, you do not have any future in this company. If so, start looking for a new job.”

A mixture of strengthening, balancing, compensating, and enduring strategies

Another example (E1026Q) from a questioner, with a foreign name, is concerned with how to enter the labor market and to get the experience for which every employer is asking. The mixture of strategies used oscillates between being individual-oriented and market-oriented. The answer (E1026A) starts with a *strengthening strategy* by confirming the value of the questioner’s experiences gained from low-paid jobs by empowering the person: “You have shown that you are able and willing to work hard and are goal-oriented.” Utilization of a *balancing strategy* follows where the advice explains how the other side works: “Employers appreciate this. They want staff they can rely on, are persistent and not afraid of doing less qualified jobs.” Then the answer adds a *compensating strategy* by recognizing parts in the story that might be a counterbalance to benefit to the questioner: “With your background, you prove exactly this. It is important you communicate this in your application/.../You can write double degrees, two languages, persistent, reliable and not afraid to work, in your application”. Finally, the questioner is encouraged with an *enduring strategy*; “Be just as persistent as when you restarted your studies.”

Strengthening strategy mixed with compensating strategy

Another example (B1023Q) is a questioner who wants to move to another job but is unsure about his chances in the competitive labor market since he is 56 years old. The answer is characterized mostly by an individual-oriented approach and uses a combination of essentially two strategies. The answer (B1023A) starts with a *strengthening strategy* by reaffirming that the questioner definitely has the potential to obtain a new job. Then a *compensating strategy* is employed by suggesting what the questioner should think about what to emphasize; “In your application, you should emphasize that you are experienced and skilled (in a non-verbal [indirect] contrast to being young and less skilled). Emphasize your stories of success, results, and performance. Describe some examples of performance that confirms how you differ from the rest.” Furthermore, the answer reveals a *mutual-oriented approach* by asking the questioner to reflect on: “How did you contribute to your employer by working there?” (B1023A).

Strengthening strategy mixed with balancing strategy

Examples from questions about *how to navigate the labor market* are answered with a mixture of *strengthening strategy* and *balancing strategy*, moving between being *individual-oriented*, *market-oriented* and *organizational-oriented*. One questioner (C0108Q) asks if it is necessary to use social media in job-search activities. The answer given (C0108A) starts with a balancing strategy by explaining social media is the modern method, but it is still the same course of action, just in new channels. The answer shows arguments for the advantages of using social media in building networks, and then moves to employing a strengthening strategy, with an individual-oriented approach, however, sub-ordinated to a market-oriented way of speaking: "I think you should try social media for your own personal marketing/.../to build your personal brand takes time. You need to set aside time to build your good relations on the web, that you can make use of in your job-searching. Find positive role-models who have used social media in good ways in their job-searching. To distinguish yourself from others/.../it is central that you think of yourself as a brand."

A similar example (B1016Q) is concerned with *the need for recognition*. Here the questioner feels she has more to give than she is provided with opportunities to show. The answer (B1016A) mainly uses the *strengthening strategy*, with an *individual-oriented approach*, by encouraging her to create a plan for her next step, figuring out what challenges she would like, and what would contribute to her growth, both personally and professionally. The questioner is asked to do a self-evaluation focusing on her strengths, talents, interests, values, knowledge, and characteristics and then she is advised to make a list of what she has accomplished over the past five years. Thereafter, the answer moves slightly to a *market-oriented* approach by suggesting she develop a personal marketing plan, and then a *balancing strategy* with an organizational orientation is used: "Talk to your boss, inform [him] about your willingness for development and new challenges. Inform about your positive results and what you would like to do more of in the future." (B1016A).

A similar example is concerned with the question of *how to advance* when it seems impossible if you are not included in the company's talent pool (E0413Q). The answer (E0413A) starts with a balancing strategy with both an individual-orientation and an organizational orientation, by explaining the need to understand the rules for including people in the talent pool. Addressing this query, the questioner is advised to inform the boss about his/her interest in further advancement (E0413A): "It is important you test him before you move on. He is young and perhaps regards you as a threat, a potential competitive candidate for his job. If so, you need to get away from that boss".

Questions (F0426Q; E0316Q) concerned with *uncertainty in current/forthcoming roles* are approached with a balancing strategy, in terms of focusing on relations, as exemplified; "It is important that your boss supports you/.../You need to get the group on your side" (F0426A). A strengthening strategy is added; "The management department choses to give both you and the group a chance". The answer moves between being mutual-oriented and individual-oriented.

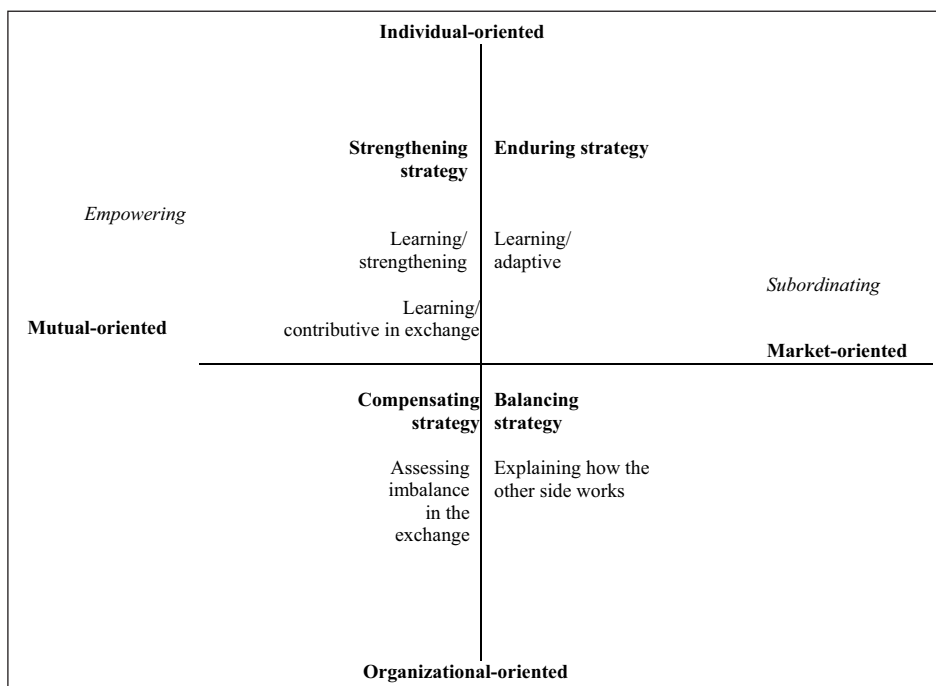


Figure 1: Strategies and orientations in career support.

Summary of dominating underlying representations of career in answers given

Since the questions are based mainly upon the social representation of *career as a game of exchange*, an exploration of the answers given show attempts trying to compensate, balance, strengthen and/or encourage people to endure the situation in this exchange – in several cases this seems to be less than mutual. As a consequence of dealing with the individual struggles in a *specific context* in which there is an imbalance of exchange in the employer-employee-relationship, some work-life contextually related representations (Jovchelovitch, 2007) occur as underlying the answers given: *career recognition as a cost issue* (F0816A, F0412A, B0914A) as exemplified by this comment: “perhaps the profitability is bad?” (F0816A); *career navigating as a risky (power)game* (D1013A; E0413A) as exemplified; “talk to your boss/.../test him/.../perhaps he sees you as a threat, a potential competitor” (E0413A); *career navigating as understanding the rules of the game* (E0413A) as exemplified: “Find out how the company usually acts when selecting employees for the talent pool” (E0413A), and finally *career navigating as personal marketing and/or strategic communication* (B1023A), as in this response: “emphasize in your application that you are experienced/.../emphasize your stories of success, your achieved results and performance” (B1023A). These context-related career representations can be understood as being a response to the questions’ contextual connection and thus need to be addressed in the answers given. In addition, the professional representation of *career as personal growth and life development*, as identified in earlier studies as related to the career guidance community (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015, 2018), emerges as underlying some of the answers (B1016A; B1030A), as exemplified: “build on your strengths” (B1030A). Such representations often occur in combination with a work-life contextually related representation. For example, *career navigating as personal marketing and/or strategic communication*, as exemplified: “prepare your job search by starting to write up your CV. What have you done in your working life and what good results have you achieved/.../search jobs in a smart way” (B1030A). In the strategies, the relationship between career navigation and learning also becomes evident and takes the shape of strengthening individuals to become aware of their strengths and how to communicate their potential to contribute in an exchanging, mutual approach. In answers characterized by a more market-oriented approach, learning takes the shape of adaptation and tactics to endure the circumstances. However, since the dynamic social representation of career as a game of exchange dominates the career struggles among questioners, the answers are characterized by attempts to support them with different strategies.

Discussion

Given the identified career struggles described in this study, it is evident that there are two principal concerns. One concerns peoples’ careers *in* the working life (i.e., *within* the workplaces) and deals with how to maintain one’s position *within* the workplace, movement *within* workplaces, and transitions to new positions *within* workplaces. Another concerns individuals’ *movement to* other working contexts and, through the processes of recruitment and the ensuing *establishment in* working life in desired working contexts. Clearly, this study reveals that something has happened in the world of work and indicates that people in these phases of their careers are searching for answers. The expressed confusion and frustration about expected, but neglected exchange, lack of outcomes, and a thirst for recognition for their efforts indicate that the earlier employer-employee relationship has become blurred and unclear (see Granrose & Bacchi, 2006). An uncertainty in how career appreciation and recognition is manifested is evident in the data and appears to create confusion and feelings of injustice (see van Dijke & De Cremer, 2016). Changes in career practices within organizations and workplaces, exemplified by talent management (see Claussen et al. 2014) and the increasing use of testing in recruitment processes (see Stobart, 2008), influence people’s experiences and interpretation of their career possibilities. Experiences of being excluded from the talent pool indicates a risk for talent management to become a practice of (unintentional) exclusion if the underlying philosophies, identified by Meyers & Voerkom (2014), are not transparent or given awareness. Whether an organization regards *all* its employees as talented or *only a few gifted ones* will most certainly have an impact on the organizational perspectives of career and on employees’ expectations of their career opportunities. These changes of practices need to be better understood, both among individuals and among career guidance counselors and advisers, as well as other professionals involved in people’s careers. With regards to the different, and even conflicting, perspectives on career (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018), a thread of diminished mutuality in the employer-employee relationship echoes through the questions. This seems to create difficulties for all parties involved in career phenomena, not only for individuals, for managers and HR practices searching for ways to handle this ambiguousness, as noted by Baruch (2004) but also among career advisers trying to support people in contexts that testify to a working life in which roles, functions, and, implicitly, careers seem characterized by more subordination in which people become mainly a means to achieve organizational goals, as further underpinned by neo-liberal trends (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018).

It is obvious that the dominance of *troubles with the game of exchange* indicates a need for both the career guidance/counselling field, and the career field within businesses and organizations to pay more attention to an *exchange-perspective on career*. Career advisers need to handle peoples' everyday knowledge and taken-for-granted meaning of career, and their thinking of *career as a game of exchange*. However, career advisers also need to become aware of their own professionally formed taken-for-granted knowledge of career, which within the Nordic context contest hierarchical meanings of career (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015; Bakke, 2020; Hagaseth Haug, et al. 2020). Both research fields of career, have tried to move beyond these traditionally, hierarchical meanings of career, but from different purposes. However, this resistance towards hierarchical meanings might have resulted in a loss of important perspectives of mutual exchange and outcomes in the employing relationship, *that not necessarily need to be conceptualized as hierarchical in itself*. By recognizing *careers from an exchange perspective* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018), such framework offers a possibility to move beyond the *either/or distinctions* between traditional versus non-traditional career paths, between subjective versus objective career success (Spurk & Hirschi, 2019), between internal versus external rewards. Rather career can be understood as a *continuous process of exchange* (Hirsh & Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018) that embraces an approach of an interactive nature, rather than setting different career elements against each other. Moreover, the framework contains links to the new generations of integrative career concepts, hybrid, and kaleidoscope careers (see Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

The mixture of career supporting-strategies occurs in combination and seems to depend on both the context and phase in which the issue/career dilemma is raised. The communicated answers are clearly context dependent. If this underlying knowledge can be regarded as shared knowledge in the *full* guidance community (including all sectors of guidance), or specific for career support in work-life related transitions needs further studies, since this study did not focus on selecting professionals representing the full guidance community. The shared professional representation (earlier identified as shared within the career guidance community) of *career as personal growth and life-development* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015) is however evident in answers applying strengthening strategies. The different strategies used in the answers give evidence of strivings to explain how the rules of the career game appear in the contemporary world of work, and how the 'other side' (employers, organizations, labor market) operates. The answers are seldom characterized by one single strategy or one single orientation. Rather, the mixture of strategies and the oscillation between orientations confirm the complexity that arise on an individual level. It also confirms how career has become more of an intertwined, shared, and bridging object between several parties involved (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). Consequently, the field of career guidance and counselling needs to pay attention to these changes of practices of career in working life, and release themselves from the uneasy relationship with career in its outdated conception, as evident in Nordic contexts (Bakke Bardsdotter, 2020; Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). It needs to take command of the concept and *all the elements* that it entails, both historically formed and future directions. Given career as a bridging object, a need to *build bridges* between the different parties involved seems urgent. This would entail building bridges between different knowledge bases about *career*; between *etic and emic knowledge* (Berry, 1969), between *scientific-, professionally-*, (Moscovici, 2001, Ratinaud & Lac, 2011) and *contextually-formed* (Jovchelovitch, 2007) representations of career, and between socially-formed representations, *common-sense* (Moscovici, 2001), taken-for granted knowledge of career, among the public and professionals working with career. A *bridging guidance approach* is therefore suggested, that manages to address a perspective of exchange and through increased awareness, with a mixture of strategies manages to build bridges between different knowledge bases about career to strengthen people in their understanding of and navigating in the complex world of work. Support for learning seems to be the *bridging commonality* between the different strategies and orientations.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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