

What Are The Factors That Shape The Career Decisions Of LSE Students?

A Dissertation submitted by

Judith Baines

Towards an

MA Career Education Information and Guidance in
Higher Education

April, 2009

University of Reading

Abstract

This study examines the effects of culture on career decision making for students at the London School of Economics (LSE). There is an existing body of research which highlights the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. However, it has been limited for international students based in the UK. At the LSE the majority of students are international so this presents a unique opportunity to carry out research into different cultures within one UK institution. The research seeks to identify differences and similarities between students from different continents. Firstly, it looks at whether they fit into the categories of individualists and collectivists and secondly if they fit with current theories of career development. The research approach is a quantitative study based on a questionnaire distributed online and completed by over 1300 students representing all six continents. The results reveal that there are many commonalities between students from different continents such as the importance of personal interest and parents. Whilst there are also differences it would seem that applying cultural stereotypes to international students at the LSE would not be appropriate. As the study is based at a single institution the research strategy used does not allow for wider generalisation but provides an important insight into the career decision making of international students.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Context.....	1
Research Questions.....	2
Report Outline.....	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
Introduction.....	4
Individualism Versus Collectivism.....	4
Cultural Values, Continents & Career Decision Making.....	5
Theories of Career Development.....	13
Chapter 3: Methodology	22
Research Strategy.....	22
Sample.....	23
Data Collection.....	23
Data Analysis.....	26
Ethics.....	27
Chapter 4: Results	28
Background of Respondents.....	29
Decision Making Status.....	30
Students' Choice of Career Sector.....	31
Influences on Choice of Sector.....	33
Influences On Why a Sector Was Previously Rejected.....	37
Factors Influencing Employer Choice.....	38
Reviewing a Job Offer.....	41
Information and Advice from Parents/Close Family.....	43
Chapter 5: Key Findings and Discussion	48
Influences on Career Decision Making.....	48
Similarities and Differences Between Continents.....	48
Individualist and Collectivist.....	52
Career Development Theories.....	52
Chapter 6: Conclusion	54
Research Questions.....	54
Limitations.....	55
Further Work.....	56
References	57
Appendices	65
Appendix 1: Sector Choice by Continent.....	65

Appendix 2: Questionnaire	67
---------------------------------	----

Figures

Figure 1: Respondents by Continent	29
Figure 2: Career decision making status by continent	30
Figure 3: Decided students' influences on sector choice (based on 1 st choice).....	34
Figure 4: Decided students' influences on sector choice (selected influences).....	35
Figure 5: Undecided students' influences on sector choice (based on 1 st choice)....	36
Figure 6: Undecided students' influences on sector choice (selected influences)....	37
Figure 7: All students' influences on employer choice (students selected 3).....	39
Figure 8: Who students would review a job offer with by continent (1 st choice only)	42

Tables

Table 1: Ethnicity.....	29
Table 2: Top 3 sectors chosen by decided students by continent	31
Table 3: Top 3 sectors chosen by undecided students by continent (students selected 3)	33
Table 4: Top 3 influences on employer choice by continent (students selected 3)...	40
Table 5: Top 3 influences on employer choice for selected Asian countries (students selected 3)	40
Table 6: Top 3 influences on employer choice for selected countries/ethnicity (students selected 3).....	41
Table 7: Top 3 influences on who students would review a job offer with by continent (students selected 3).....	42

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is looking at the influences on career decision making of students and how this might be affected by cultural differences, in particular differences between so-called individualist and collectivist societies. The study is based on students from the London School of Economics (LSE) which has a very high proportion of international students making it an ideal site for this research.

Context

My interest in this subject has developed from my experience as a Careers Advisor at the LSE and previously at London Metropolitan University (London Met.). The LSE has around 6000 international students; at 67% it is the largest proportion of overseas students at any university in the world with representatives from around 140 countries. When I worked at London Met. it had one of the largest international student populations in the UK, around 5,000 students. Only 3 UK universities had a 5,000 plus figure; this has since increased to fourteen (Telegraph, 2008).

The proportion of international students was much smaller at London Met., so like most other UK universities they were viewed as a specialist student group. This meant that in addition to the central workshop programme aimed at all students, there was a parallel programme of international student workshops. At the LSE the international students are in the majority leading to central workshop programme that is for all students regardless of nationality. London Met. also had a specialist International Student Advisor whilst the LSE has none as all staff see all students.

No matter what the size of the international student population, it is important that the staff of any Careers Service are aware of what really motivates their clients, what their values and attitudes are. Despite the different approaches to working with international students of both universities and the different level of exposure to them, the assumptions made by the Careers teams often were and are the same. For example, in some Asian countries parents will choose their children's careers for them.

Careers advisers are usually motivated by a desire to help people as individuals and to encourage students towards self efficacy and so it would help to understand

whether this approach would be appropriate or whether the student is happy to follow their parents direction. Tomlinson (2007: 286) writes:

“There has therefore been a tendency to view students in “universalistic” terms; that is, as rational investors in education who approach the labour market in uniformed and stereotypical ways. Such assumptions typically negate the different orientations and work-related identities learners develop in relation to their future labour market activities.”

Research Questions

Where is our evidence for the influences upon the career motivations of LSE students other than anecdotes? The student population makes LSE unique and presents an opportunity to carry out research into different cultures within one institution. The research will look at these aspects and seek to identify differences and similarities between the different cultural backgrounds which should assist with service provision and planning. Is the one size fits all approach to careers advice and guidance appropriate? Or should we be offering a parallel programme of workshops to international students as other universities do?

Aycan and Fikret-Pasa (2003) suggested that the best way to investigate the impact of culture on career development is through cross-cultural research and this piece of research will fit in with that. LSE students are very motivated and have a very high level of engagement with the Careers Service. During 2007/08 around 45,000 students visited the Careers Centre; 5,500 had one to one sessions and 7000+ students attended career management workshops. Hopefully, this high level of usage of the service will enable the researcher a high level of interaction with the students and a reasonable chance of engagement with the research.

The research approach is a quantitative study based on a questionnaire distributed online. The research questions to be answered are:

- What influences the career decisions of LSE students?
- Do the students fit with the research into career decision making and culture?
- Are there clear cut differences between continents or is there more common ground than we might expect?
- Are the current career decision making theories applicable?

Report Outline

This introduction is followed by a review of the available literature. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and explains why a quantitative approach was taken. The Results chapter then presents the data and provides the initial analysis. In Chapter 5: Key Findings and Discussion, further analysis is presented and the findings are related to the findings of the literature review. The concluding chapter summarises the study, highlights its limitations and suggests areas for further work.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review is in three parts: a general overview of individualist and collectivist societies; an examination of the influence of cultural values and continents on career decision making; and finally a review of current careers theories and their relevance to different cultures.

There is limited research into the effects of culture on career development and into socioeconomic background (Savickas, 2000; Brown et al, 2005). Nilsson et al's (2007) content analysis of international career articles identified 326 articles from 1970-2004 with few papers from South/Central America and Africa; they mainly came from U.S, Israel, Canada, Australia, England and China. Only 19.3% of the papers were on College students.

While U.S research represented a broad number of cultures, which is supported by Aycan and Fikret-Pasa (2003), the top three countries published were English speaking. Nilsson et al (2007) believe that there research into vocational psychology being carried out in different countries that U.S. scholars know little about.

Individualism Versus Collectivism

Carrying out the literature review into different countries, individualism versus collectivism featured frequently although the terminology differed. Markus and Kitayma (1991: 227) list alternative phrases, for example individualism can be called: "egocentric, separate, autonomous, idiocentric and self contained." Collectivism: sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, assembled, constitutive, contextualist, connected and relational." In accordance with Parnham and Austin (1994) I believe that there is a danger in using categories that can lead to stereotyping. But for the purposes of this research I will use the terms individualism and collectivism as the terminology is commonly used and it will assist with categorising the literature review.

The definition from Hofstede (1991, cited in Guichard and Lenz, 2005:17) is particularly clear and helpful:

“Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.”

Individualism is about having choices and opinions and the culture fosters self efficacy. Collectivism means that the self is made meaningful in relation to others and individualism may not be a high concern. Markus and Kitayma (1991: 27) recognised that in collectivist cultures decisions can be formed around the family’s views and cultural values and these cultures can inhibit self efficacy. Triandis (1995: 11) concurred with this:

“Collectivists are often socialized to enjoy doing their duty, even if that requires some sacrifices. Individualists do their duty only when their computations of the advantages and disadvantages suggest they would derive a clear benefit”

Conflicting viewpoints have arisen into socio-economic status in relation to collectivism. Daab (1991, cited in Triandis 1994) believes financial independence leads to social independence claiming the upper classes in educated societies tended towards individualism. Arulmani, Van Laar and Easton’s (2003) research into Indian high school students concurred. In contrast, McArthur (1954, cited in Leong and Austin, 1998) in a study of undergraduates found that family pressure on those from high social economic backgrounds may determine occupational choice. Interestingly, Scheper-Hughes (1985, cited in Triandis 1994) found that poverty could be associated with individualism and McArthur concurred, feeling that those from a lower social class were not pressured by families in the same way.

Cultural Values, Continents & Career Decision Making

Broadly speaking the individualist societies are those from Europe, North America & Australasia while the collectivist cultures are found in Asia, Africa & South America. For the purposes of this research the Middle East, including Turkey has been grouped with Asia while North America includes the United States of America, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

Individualism or Euro-Centricism

Mau (2004) reviewed the literature on individualism and collectivism concluding that persons in the U.S. and other Western industrialised countries score highly as individualists. The similarities even led to the phrase European Americans.

Cheatham (1990: 3) states:

“The Eurocentric orientation emphasises western values, ethos and belief; it values competition, individuation, and mastery over nature ... assumes universality of beliefs, attitudes and values.”

For the purposes of this research the prevailing Eurocentric, Western values of an individualistic culture will be taken as proven to limit the scope of the literature as it would be beyond the scope of this research to look at the literature for each European country.

Within the so-called Eurocentric countries it needs to be recognised that there are minority groups who are more collectivist in and it is important to be careful about making assumptions. Triandis (1994) summarises some of Hofstede's (1984) key findings stating that individualism is relatively high in Europe apart from areas such as southern Italy and rural Greece where collectivism is more common. Lebo and Harrington (1995) also found that within countries the cultures were not identical putting this down to the cultures of an immigrant and refugee population while Mau (2004) found minority groups in the United States (i.e. Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans) to be more group orientated compared with European Americans.

Several studies have been carried out into the values and motivations of students across Eurocentric countries and common work values sought are: salary (and benefits), job security, advancement, development, challenges and responsibility, work life balance and international career. Lebo and Harrington (1995) found there was little difference in selecting work values across countries; salary, job security and variety-diversion, scored in the top 3 for all but the U.S. Spanish speaking. In a study of 19,000 U.S. students, Koc (2008) identified the top 3 criteria for a job as opportunity for advancement, job security and a good insurance package. The researchers speculated that this top 3 could be related to the then impending economic crisis, the emphasis in the political debate on health and social security in

the run up to the U.S. election or the influence of parents. A Canadian study of business students found priorities in a job included opportunities for advancement, training and development opportunities, good colleagues and managers, challenging work and a good starting salary (Ng and Burke, 2006). Lent et al (2002: 70) noted that interests and work-relevant experiences were frequently cited as bases for choice selection; while negative expectations of work conditions, negative family influence and disconfirming work experience were cited as reasons to reject choices.

There is specific research into Mexican Americans which places them in the individualist culture (Arbona with Novy, 1991). Arbona (1995) reviewed some of the most prevalent careers theories in relation to Hispanics. She found that middle class, upper class and college educated Mexican Americans (regardless of socio economic background) were similar in their outlook towards work as White Americans. (Hall, 1972; Gould, 1980 and Luzzo, 1992) all concurred with this research. However, caution may need to be exercised when applying this to Mexicans living in Mexico as this research was not accessible.

The UK Graduate Careers Survey (2008) surveyed students to find out what their expectations were from a graduate job. Daily challenges and responsibility were a high priority as was location, reputation, salary, work life balance, giving something back to the community and the opportunity for rapid promotion. The most important priority was for “the nature of the work they would be doing.” (Midgley, 2008). Research by Counsell (1996) identified wealth, overall job satisfaction, a managerial position, working abroad and working with people as the top five factors in a study of Business students. Universum (2008) carried out a survey with 62 UK universities with 11,106 students replying; of these 260 were from the LSE (77% international students). Their top 3 career goals were to: be competitively or intellectually challenged; have a work/life balance and to have an international career.

The key influences for students from individualistic societies are personal interests, work experience and parents. Parents are an important influence in students' decision making in an advice and support role despite the individualistic culture, a role that seems to be increasing. Taylor et al (2004: 16) highlight the numerous studies in which students cite parents as playing an important role in their decisions even going so far as to say:

“Without parental approval or support, students and young adults are often reluctant to pursue – or even explore – diverse career possibilities... yet parents may be unaware of the influence they have on the career development and vocational choice of their children.”

Koc (2008) found 70% of graduating students said they would review a job offer with their parents. Counsell (1996) found the top influences on career decisions were information and advice from parents and close family followed by friends and acquaintances; work experience was important as were the subject studied at university and advice from tutors. In Australia Bright et al (2005) also found that the social context, especially family, had an impact on career decisions, but that the impact lessens with time as students mature.

Anecdotally, UK careers services have seen an increase in the number of parents accompanying their offspring to open days and asking questions. The term “helicopter parents” has become commonplace amongst careers advisers. UCAS introduced a mechanism whereby parents can manage the university process on behalf of their offspring. Furedi (cited in Curtis 2008) has written about the increase in involvement of parents at such events and whilst other commentators believe that this increase is due to financial considerations, Furedi believes it more to do with parents not being able to let go.

Asia (Including the Middle East)

The research for Asia is dominated by Chinese based populations. This could be that they are an emerging economy so this has become more pressing for the home country, or the fact that there are a large number of immigrant Chinese populations, either living permanently in the other countries or studying there.

Hofstede’s (1984: 151) view is that Mao’s “anti-individualistic, pro-collectivistic ethos is deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition.” Yang et al (2002) note that Korean college students found that choosing a career which satisfied their family was more important than satisfying their own career choices. Patel, Salahuddin and O’Brien (2008) talk about the Vietnamese belonging to a collectivist society, where hard work and education are ranked highly in the culture and the success of children can improve the circumstances of the family as a whole. Gould (1980) comes to the same conclusion for Indonesian students. Leung (2002) tracks changes to career counselling services in Hong Kong and points out that although the educational

system is based on the British system, work values are still collectivistic. Salazar-Clemina (2002) found that despite the heavy US influence in the Philippines, parental influence often based on economic improvement is important to the career choice of adolescents and they often make the career choices for them. The Thai culture puts emphasis on responding to the needs of others and keeping harmonious interpersonal relations (Triandis, 1994). The Japanese collectivist culture is confirmed by Pekerti (2008) and Gould (1980). Mau (2000) again looked at Taiwanese and Americans in their home universities. Taiwanese students significantly outscored American students in the dependent measure which confirmed his hypothesis as collectivist decision making is important in Taiwanese culture.

So Asian countries are primarily collectivist in nature but there is an exception. Aycan and Fikret-Pasa (2003) researched 1,213 students across 17 Turkish universities, majoring in business administration and economics. Career choice was mostly influenced by individual choices and collectivist influences eg family were least influential. Turkey has a society where you would expect to find collectivist influence but the economy and so the culture is changing so quickly that maybe this is no longer such an important factor.

Within immigrant populations, even second generation, there are differences between acculturation and taking on the values of the adopted society. Pekerti (2008) reported that the Overseas Chinese (OC) retain their collectivist orientation whether it be elsewhere in S.E. Asia or second generation in Britain and the U.S. Shea, Ma and Yeh (2007: 69) point to the fact that "Being aware of the great sacrifices their families have made to come to the United States for their education, some immigrant youth may want to attain academic accomplishments and make a career choice out of a sense of family obligation." However, a study by Tatsuno (2002) found that the Japanese in America are closer in cultural values to European/American values than the Chinese a conclusion echoed by Sue and Kirk (1972) and Pekerti (2008).

Where students are torn between two cultures it can lead to personal conflict with this leading to career indecision; retaining the collectivist culture can lead to decisiveness. Mau (2004: 69) provided evidence that Asian American high school/university students had more difficulties in making career decisions than their white counterparts. Ma and Yeh's (2005: 343) study added that the more that "Chinese American youths define themselves in terms of close others, the more likely

they are to feel certain about their career choice.” This conflict between cultures can occur even when students are just studying abroad. Zhou and Santos (2007) evaluated cultural differences in the career decision making of students in two British universities which included 86 Chinese internationals. The Chinese students reported more external conflicts than British and the higher indecision could reflect a conflict between what they want and what others want for them. Shih and Brown (2000) found that Taiwanese students in U.S. universities who identified primarily as Asian had higher vocational identity; this could be because they have thought hard about their career before studying abroad or because they have a collectivist culture.

Dependent decision making can be seen as being less mature and more indecisive by students when being self assessed by western standards. Leong (1991) found that Asian Americans had a higher preference for dependent decision making and lower career maturity and rated aspects such as income, status and security higher than White American students. Lee's (2001) study of 11th grade students in Korea and the U.S. used a Career Attitude Maturity Inventory and found that American students had a higher level of career maturity; Korean students rated money as being important in choosing a job, whereas American students emphasised status and job environment. Lee concluded that career maturity can vary due to cultural variances such as collectivism. Mau (2004: 75) warns practitioners that “it is culturally insensitive to prejudge an individual as immature when he or she seeks approval for parents for his or her career choices.”

Patronage, the family business and who you know counts more than formal applications in some cultures and so students from these backgrounds can seem less motivated about career and therefore less mature. Sultana and Watts' (2008: 24) research into 10 Middle East and North African countries found a collectivist culture with the “notion of clan, around which several aspects of social relations come together.” Clans organise business alliances and emphasise patronage which exists in Arab society, where influence and networks can be more important over formal recruitment to jobs. Nasser and Abouchedid (2005) found the same for Lebanon where family business is dominant and most graduates finding jobs through friends and family rather than through formal applications. However, Sultana and Watts (2008) question whether these systems can remain as economies emerge.

Asian culture rates “good careers” highly which can be based on and status/prestige, financial security for example science careers and the professions. Arulmani, Van

Laar and Easton (2003: 197) summarised research into Indian middle class high students and family influence and found it pushed them towards just the three or four “good” careers. Tang, Fouad and Smith (1999: 152) researched influences on career choices of Asian/American students in U.S. universities and concurred that those students with high socioeconomic status who were less assimilated into U.S. culture chose “good” careers that offer financial security and status. Lightbody et al (1997) concurred with these findings as the family beliefs about a “good” career influenced UK Asian students more than British students.

There are a variety of views on why students from collectivist cultures would choose careers in the humanities or those characterised by social aspects. Tang et al (1999) found these students had higher acculturation and less family involvement. Sultana and Watts (2008) established that the highest performing students entered “good” careers and lower grade students the humanities. Pope et al’s (2002) looking at Malaysia suggested that as a country moved towards industry, the breadth of occupations with status are expanding to include those in liberal arts and communications. Chia, Koh and Pragasam (2008) examined the motivations of accounting students in Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore with the two latter countries having large Chinese populations. The most important career driver was contributing to public service; “expertise” was the second highest driver ie. professional training and specialist knowledge; status was third. Students in Australia and Singapore valued “creativity” more than those in Hong Kong which could be due to a shift in Singaporean society where individuality is taking hold as the economy changes. This fits with the research into Turkey mentioned previously.

Africa

The research into Africa finds the culture to be collectivist. Sultana and Watts (2008) emphasised the importance of family influence and the collectivist culture in North African countries. Hofstede (1984) placed South Africa in his Country Individualism Index at 16th so leaning more to individualism but at the date of the research this was probably based more on White South Africans and so this may not be true today.

Within immigrant populations many have retained their collectivist culture although this is not true across the board. Cheatham (1990) talks about “Africentrism” whereby African Americans have retained the cultural values of Africa which has led to some commentators believing that African Americans are developmentally delayed

with career decision making as judged by western standards. This is similar to the research into Asian culture. However, Cheatham cautions against labelling all African Americans as collectivist/Africentric as some have become acculturised and moved towards being individualist (Eurocentric) maybe based on social class. Stebleton (2007) also emphasised the differences within African immigrant populations in the U.S. but believes that they have in common the same values and beliefs based on the importance of family and community, regardless of their diversity. Falconer and Hays (2006) noted the emphasis that African American university students put on the wider community and support from mentors, peers and family, although sometimes there was pressure from family.

Stebleton goes on to talk about the circumstances which can impact upon the career choices of those living in Africa or those who have emigrated:

“Examples include socio-political events and factors such as war, fleeing one’s country of origin, political oppression, historical circumstances, labor laws, disease, natural disaster and poverty.” (Stebleton 2007: 293)

He speculates as to whether this can lead to not take a “planful” decision –making approach to their career.

Africans have contrasting values with status/prestige and financial security being important to Africans but so is giving something back to society via career choice. The researchers Daire, LaMothe and Fuller (2007) looked at previous research which concluded that Black/African students value serving the community but also value financial reward and status. Their own research comparing Black/African American and white college students in the U.S. confirmed the latter. Sultana and Watts (2008) found students entered the high income/high status jobs primarily followed by the humanities. Cheatham (1990) noted the high number of African Americans in the social and behavioural science related occupations and Euvrad (cited in Stebleton 2007: 296) found that pupils in South Africa wanted to put something back into their society.

South America

There is little research into South American culture and career decision making. Hofstede’s (1984) table of countries by the individualism index places Chile, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela in the bottom 10 out of 40 countries with Argentina and

Brazil a little higher indicating that South America has a more collectivist society. Mau (2004) in his review on the literature pertaining to individualism and collectivism found that Latin America scored highly as collectivists, backed up by Triandis (1994).

The only research into Latin America was focussed on Mexico (see above). However, it would be dangerous to apply this directly to other South American countries without evidence.

Summary

The literature review shows that Western cultures are in the main individualistic and Asia, Africa and South America are primarily collectivist in nature. People from collectivist cultures often retain these values even when they live abroad, although this is not true across the board, but where they become acculturated this can lead to conflict with their families. Dependent decision making can be seen as being less mature when being self assessed by western standards but collectivist career decisions can also lead to more decisiveness.

Financial security and prestige in a career is important across all cultures as is the influence of parents, although in an individualist culture their role is less directive. Other common work values in Eurocentric countries are job security, opportunities for development, challenging work, a good work life balance, an international career and maybe selecting a career that gives something back to society. Africa differs to other collectivist cultures in valuing the latter.

The review also noted speculation as to whether as economies emerge the breadth of occupations with status change in individualist cultures. There were several calls for further research into socio economic background or status as to whether this transcends a collectivist culture enabling students to be more pro active in planning their career

Theories of Career Development

Globalisation has led to an increase in labour mobility and in the number of students studying abroad. Careers advisers are being exposed to a multinational clientele using theories of career development which are most widely based on cohorts of white, middle class men in Western societies.

Thomas and Inkson (2007: 453) expand upon this saying theories are based on:

“post-industrial free-market democratic institutions and values such as bureaucracy, meritocracy, individual, freedom of choice, free enterprise, open labour market, peace, occupation, profession, occupational choice, hierarchy, progress, work ethic and socioeconomic status.”

These concepts are not yet applicable to all members of society in emerging economies and other countries as we've seen in the earlier literature review. Western/Eurocentric theories are based on individualist cultures whose values are very different to those from collectivist cultures. Arthur (2005) reviewed the literature into culturally appropriate career interventions and felt that theories needed to encourage advisers to think more about societal influences on their clients.

Leong (2002: 282) gets at the heart of the matter with existing theories in his paper on cultural accommodation and Asia which looks at universal elements which will be applicable across all cultures such as job satisfaction:

“I am assuming that every human being seeks satisfaction from his or her work; it is the correlates, their meaning and sources of satisfaction, that are likely to vary across cultures.”

Careers theories are often based on individualism and self knowledge leading to decision making which can conflict with collectivist cultures and so I will consider this in relation to the theories.

Kidd (2006) usefully categorised the theories into 4 areas which I will follow although within these I will focus on the dominant perspectives as there is more literature available critiquing the cultural aspects of the perspective and they have been influential in improving practice. I will also restrict my critique to cultural relevance as I am examining the theories to see whether they would give me the scope to deal with a potentially mixed clientele of both individualistic and collectivist students at the LSE.

Person-Environment Fit

Parsons introduced the first real career development theory based on the match between self knowledge and knowledge of the world of work. Rodger and Holland

were also influential in this area which is known as matching or trait and factor theories. Holland's theory is the most dominant and so the focus within this section.

Holland's theory evolved post war in response to the need to match masses of people to jobs. The matching approach looks at the client's personal abilities, aptitudes, interests etc (traits) and matches them to an occupation through the adviser's ("expert's) knowledge of jobs and labour market; this match should result in job satisfaction. It is:

“based on the underlying premise that career choice is an expression of one's personality and, thus, that members of an occupation have similar personalities and similar histories.” (Swanson & Fouad 1999: 64)

Matching theories see work as the primary basis for satisfaction and being predicated on free choice whilst we have seen that cultural specific determinants on occupational choice may lead to choosing a career under parental pressure, picking a career for the status of a title which may be valuable in their home country or for the high salary:

“For the vast majority, who pin their desire for economic improvement on a son or daughter's completion of a degree, this often means arriving at career choices for their children, regardless of the factors considered by person-environment fit theories.” (Salzar-Clemena, 2002: 252)

The client may still be satisfied but that will come through pleasing their family so trying to match clients by skills preferences and fulfilment in this case would mean nothing. Clients from Eurocentric cultures may also be motivated by status and income as opposed to interests.

Leong and Austin (1998: 450) evaluated Holland's theory in India and pointed out that they as researchers were assuming that “occupational interest is a major determinant of occupational choice among individual members of a society” and that maybe this predication is incorrect for workers in India with a collectivist culture. The psychometric tests used as part of this theory are also based on a white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant norm referenced group whilst people from other cultures may have a different view on occupations than those from a Eurocentric culture.

The theories are based on a steady labour market and a client whose outlook remains the same throughout their working life with career choice being viewed as a single event with a right answer. It is a static theory that doesn't move on or evolve; a snapshot of a client at a certain moment in time. Bimrose quotes from Mitchell and Krumboltz on the flaws in the theory as to how it can be of limited use when the market place is changing: "Trying to place an evolving person into the changing work environment.....is like trying to hit a butterfly with a boomerang." (Mitchell and Krumboltz 1996:263). This is quite pertinent to emerging economies where new roles and opportunities occur or to countries such as Africa that are affected by socio-political events.

Holland developed his theory further moving on to Person-environment fit which whilst now acknowledging the developmental nature of career, was still based on free choice.

The matching element is still used and underpins several computerised tests, occupational information and career management skills. But for collectivist cultures, Leong and Chou (1994: 167) summarise the situation:

"Career choice and career advancement may be seen more as means of providing for one's own family, helping one's siblings, and fulfilling one's responsibility to care for parents in their old age than as ways of implementing self attributes."

Developmental

Super and Ginsberg are the main theorists in this category, although Gottfredson introduced a theory of circumspection and compromise which took into account the influence of sex, race and social class but the theory is not well researched. Unlike trait and factor, these theories addressed the idea of career choice as a lifelong process with changes occurring at different set stages in a client's life focussing on life span and career maturity. This section will focus on Super as the theory is more dominant.

Super was a psychologist interested in values, beliefs and morals. His first theory was based on five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline based on white middle class men. This model was modified several times for example, in response to criticism about life not moving through the stages in a linear

fashion and the lack of focus on women's life stages. This resulted in Super devising the Life Career Rainbow which took account of stages in life such as the "Homemaker."

Super's theory was based on factors that influence career choice such as interests and abilities rather than the developmental stages that got them there. The theory also assumes that individuals have the autonomy to change their situation and raises aspirations failing to acknowledge economic and social factors; in reality clients can face discrimination on many grounds eg. university attended, social background, ethnicity or may be unwilling to exercise autonomy if from a collectivist culture.

A key Super concept is career maturity "an individual's readiness for coping with the tasks of career development as compared with others handling the task" (Kidd 2007:100). Super designed a Career Development Inventory (CDI) that had questions to assess career maturity in terms of where an individual was in the process of career exploration and decision making and their knowledge of the labour market. Crites developed this further to include an assessment of the client's involvement in the decision-making. Kidd (2007:100) stated that "Some of these measures are strongly value laden, however, assuming that is somehow more "mature" to seek intrinsic rather than extrinsic satisfaction from work" Glavin and Watson (2004) concurred that individuals based in collectivist cultures may score lower on career maturity inventory when it is based on western measures It is also difficult to measure and assess as it "is a hypothetical concept." (Patton and McMahon 2006: 55). Arbona (1995: 51) found that Super's theory was relevant to certain social classes of Hispanics and to College students but suggested that "Super's stage theory need to be expanded to examine the impact of ethnic identity formation in the career development process of Hispanics." This could be applied more widely over other cultures where individuals need time to adjust to balancing individualist needs with collectivist needs which may also come about through acculturation.

Arnold (1997:97) found the concept questionable as it "seems to imply something increasingly unrealistic nowadays, namely an orderly unfolding of personal capacity to meet predictable environmental demands." This is echoed by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997: 32) criticising the developmental model for "treating each person as a discrete entity and minimising the impact of social and contextual factors as part of the decision-making process."

It is still an influential theory despite criticism that it does not take account of culture of application and that people may not encounter all the life stages in the theory's proportions. It underlies Law's DOTS approach to guidance and careers education and it underlies Prospects Planner, a career planning tool. (NGRF, 2009)

Structural Theories

Ken Roberts, a sociologist introduced the theory of Opportunity Structure which disagrees with the development emphasis that came before it. He sees individuals as limited by socially defined opportunity structures which cannot be avoided; people adjust to what is deemed most appropriate to them by society. This challenged Super's idea of choice:

“... for most people occupational choice is structured by factors outside the individual, including social class, educational opportunities and the current state of the labour market, depending on economic trends in supply and demand.” (Ali and Graham, 2007: 40).

Roberts believes that aspirations are determined by the socialisation that takes place from early years within the family unit and that values related to work are formed in this environment and then influenced by school, peer groups, the environment and job opportunities: “... people do not typically “choose” occupations in any meaningful sense: they simply take what is available.” (Roberts 1997:1). As mentioned before socio-political events can affect job opportunities; there are societies where patronage is essential to pursue a career or where a student may be expected to join the family business.

The theory was important but not popular with careers services as it was fatalistic and demotivating in its belief that an individual could not change circumstances and that clients should adjust to fit the labour market. Whilst acknowledging that society can restrict opportunities, careers services agreed with Super (1981:14) that social mobility was possible:

“... statuses are many, diverse, and acquired as well as bequeathed or ascribed. It is equally necessary to take into account the fact that aptitudes and motivation are important determinants of the acquisition of statuses other than those one's parents might transmit.”

However, Roberts view is appropriate to the literature review into collectivist cultures where an individual is not always autonomous and does not always have the right to choose their career path. Roberts theory seems particularly relevant at the time of this questionnaire as there are students who are finding it difficult to obtain their first choice of career due to the Credit Crunch and there will be international students who are further restricted due to recent changes in visa regulations. Raising aspirations cannot get around the realities of the current labour market.

Social Influence in Career Decision Making

Many of the earlier theories placed work as being of central importance in people's lives. Bandura created the Social Learning Theory which was based on instrumental, associative and vicarious learning experiences. Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Development (1979) drew on this by explaining how an individual assimilates information, learns from experience and develops the skills of career choice and implementation. The main influences on career decision making were genetic endowment and special abilities; environmental conditions and events: learning experiences and task approach skills. They culminate in a constant self assessment of an individual's performance and a view of the future of the environment in which they live. However, Krumboltz sees environmental factors an external factor not an actual part of the careers decision making process.

Law (1981) saw a gap between trait and factor and opportunity structure and tried to bridge the gap from both psychological and sociological perspectives. The Community Interaction Theory focuses on the community in which an individual lives and how the every day interactions that they engage in will influence, shape and develop them as people. Law believed that individuals are not determined by their communities for example a working class student can decide to break away from the family pattern and attend university. Individuals have "agency", the ability to enact their plans, but the immediate context does shape action.

Kidd (1984: 34) summarises Law's five influences as "feedback, support, modelling, information and expectations." The theory emphasised the importance of cultural but whilst collectivistic cultures will influence individuals through community and role models, they are more likely to reinforce the role model of satisfying the family. Ali and Graham (2007: 42) concurred with this believing that for those with a strong sense of self, the use of community could work in the way that Law describes and

they could go their own way despite the wishes of the community. But for those less strong willed they “may succumb to external pressure and relinquish their own preferences.” The theory does emphasise the influence of others and the external influence and does not put emphasis on the self. But in contrast to Roberts (1979) who accepts the limitations of the labour market, Law suggests that use of the community can improve opportunities through networking.

Lent, Brown and Hackett’s Social Cognitive Career Theory (1996: 315) was based on Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986). They built upon this and put emphasis on variables such as self-efficacy but took account of the context of individuals such as support systems that may constrain or enhance. Brown’s work is very much values-based and does take into account culture, gender and socio economic status and acknowledges their influence on values:

“There are many instances in which choice may be constrained, for example, by economic need, family dictate, discrimination, or educational considerations ... career choice may be less an expression of personal interests than of other factors.” (Lent and Brown 1996:315).

It also equates work values with outcome expectations which would satisfy preferences such as reward i.e. money and status and acknowledged the work of Roberts by taking into account job availability and sociostructural barriers. However, it is early days for the theory and there has been little research into its practical application.

Summary

Stead (2004) believes that most careers theories are ethnocentric as they look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own culture. In the first three theories “their own cultural backgrounds, personal interests, and world views were used to initiate the development of their theories (which is acceptable), but without sufficiently noting the cultural limitations of their work.” (June and Pringle cited in Parham and Austin 1994: 140). The fourth set of theories seem on the surface to be more appropriate, particularly the latter, as it acknowledges that students may not always match their own interests and values to a career and may have to compromise which fits with collectivist cultures.

Stead (2004) also criticised attempts to try to adapt existing theories to different cultures by adding on cultural concepts and other models as he felt that they are relevant only to the cultures that they are evolved in. Stead felt that “cultural issues in the career literature have remained largely sidelined.”(Stead cited in Pekerti 2008: 363). It remains to be seen whether LSE students fit with the theories.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research strategy that was adopted for this study and covers the ethical issues that had to be considered.

Research Strategy

This research tests current theories to see if they are appropriate for the career decision making of LSE students. It was not looking to generate new theory. Bryman (2008) suggests a quantitative approach is the most appropriate method in this case so a questionnaire was the primary research method. The questionnaire included some open-ended questions to generate some qualitative data which Miles and Humberman (1994:10) suggest provides a useful supplement to further interpret quantitative findings.

Questionnaires

Davies (2007) highlights the necessity of considering time available and flexibility when considering research methods. I had more time available earlier on which fits with the emphasis in quantitative research on time given to the planning and design stages. It also had the advantage of offering wide coverage of a range of questions whilst ensuring confidentiality.

Self-administered surveys are lower cost than other methods which enables the researcher to reach a wider sample and a single person can conduct the survey from start to finish (Bourque & Fielder, 1995).

The downside to a questionnaire is that no matter how carefully the questions are worded, respondents may interpret them differently and there is little opportunity to qualify meaning:

“Measurement errors in self administered surveys could arise from the respondent (lack of motivation, comprehension problems, deliberate distortion, etc.) or from the instrument (poor wording or design, technical flaws, etc.).” (Couper, 2000:12)

Sample

The original intention was to carry out a random stratified sample of the LSE student population, with a weighted sample for each demographic (in this case country or continent of origin). This would ensure that more rigorous comparisons could be made between the groups (Nesbary, 2000: 10). However, even after carrying out research and discussing it with colleagues, I could not be certain of the sample size needed to be representative and how to work out the statistical power.

Eventually, due to time constraints I opted for a non probability sample and included the whole population of 8,993 students. It is a convenience sample as the students are taken from the LSE where I am based and to which I have relatively easy access:

Convenience samples are quite common in social research probably because “probability sampling requires a lot of preparation, so is frequently avoided because of the difficulty and costs involved.” (Bryman, 2008: 183).

This could also be categorised as purposive. The downside of a purposive sample is that it may not be proportional, in this case in the representation of the different continents. I was likely to get more responses from subgroups who were amenable to filling in the form or even from those departments which I worked closely with. I hoped to try to compensate for this with follow-up emails to specific groups to get nearer to the proportions of students from each continent

As this was a non probability sample it is not possible to generalize the findings beyond the LSE to the wider population as this would be misleading (Couper, 2000).

Data Collection

Web Survey

A web survey with email distribution was selected. All LSE students have an email account with free access to the internet so and there are a number of advantages for this form of survey. Tse (1998) notes that compared to postal surveys they are cheaper, faster in transmission, more likely to be answered and less likely to be perceived as junk mail. A further advantage is that answers do not have to be coded which can minimise errors and lends itself to a large number of responses.

The disadvantages can be getting hold of email address lists, emails being mistaken for spam and that people who are open to email surveys may not be representative of the population. The latter hopefully would not be an issue as LSE students are very focussed on the internet as a form of communication. Bryman (2008) highlights worries that potential respondents may have about confidentiality and security on the web, including fraud and hackers which cannot occur with paper-based surveys. However Couper (2000) suggests that if the on-line questionnaire did not ask for very sensitive information, as is the case here, then this could overcome these worries.

Studies of response rates to web surveys show high but declining rates, for example Sheehan (2001) reports a mean response rate of 37% that had fallen from around 60% in 1986 to 24% in 2000. It has been regularly reported (Sheehan and Hoy, 1997; Tse, 1998; Sheehan, 2001) that reminder email messages can increase response rates from between 8 to 48% so this strategy was adopted. It was important to get email recipients to open and engage with the process rather than automatically deleting the email. Sheehan (2001) reported topic salience as a key influence in response rates so this will be vital.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire¹ was designed and delivered on surveymonkey.com. It was designed to encourage responses and minimise incomplete submissions. It was anonymous and kept as short as possible. The introductory email outlined the purpose of the survey, emphasised that it would be brief, provided contact details for myself and the tutor and provided a link to the on-line consent form (see Ethics). Crawford et al (2001, cited in Bryman, 2008) found that if respondents abandoned the filling in of an on-line questionnaire, it tended to be during a series of open questions. The questionnaire was structured logically with questions requiring a more detailed response and optional questions left until later; automatic skipping of non relevant sections was included. Bryman (2008) notes that respondents may become frustrated when the options do not accurately reflect their view so "Other" was offered as an option. As research by Couper et al, 2004 (cited in Bryman, 2008) shows that radio buttons are preferable over drop-down menus these were used wherever possible.

¹ The questionnaire served a dual purpose and included some questions for the LSE Careers service in general that would not contribute to this research.

The drafting of the survey involved consultation with a number of parties, including the LSE Student Records team, Careers Service colleagues and students. For example, it proved difficult to find an appropriate measurement for socio-economic background but following discussions with the LSE Awards office and some international students a question was added about educational status of parents.

Pilot

A pilot of the questionnaire was carried out to get feedback on the terminology, to see whether the questionnaire results could be analysed and to check the time required by respondents. As Davies (2007) notes it is important to pilot with respondents similar to the research population as possible. The LSE Careers Service employs part-time student helpers and the full-time staff team also has several recent graduates of the LSE on it with a variety of nationalities so they were invited to participate in the pilot.

There was not always consensus and some amendments had to be considered. For example, the term “Hispanic” in the ethnicity section received mixed feedback but after weighing up the pros and cons of alternatives such “Latino” or “Chicano,” the term remained. Rivera et al (1999: 91) use the term to describe “people whose origin is from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, including countries in Central and South America.”

The Careers Service system (Casigma) was used to send the finalised questionnaire email to all students. It allows mailings to subgroups so it was possible to exclude postgraduate research students, general course and inter-collegiate students and also to send follow-up emails to specific groups.

The email was sent out on 24th November 2008 to 8,993 students. Around 505 students responded; a reminder to all students (but directed at each continent separately to encourage participation) was then sent on 27th November doubling the number to around 1100. A final reminder was sent by continent on 4th December (which included separate messages for Mexican and Turkish students in case they had not responded earlier due to unease with the North America / Asia (inc. Middle East) classification).

Data Analysis

Analysing Questionnaire data

Some initial work was done in SurveyMonkey.com to filter out incomplete responses but the bulk of the analysis was done in Excel and Minitab. A considerable amount of work had to be done to reorganise the data and to convert the counts to appropriate percentages. Percentage responses by continent were calculated for all questions.

Analysing Open Questions

The responses to open questions were sifted and recategorised where appropriate. Subjective judgements over meaning were made where necessary but if I was unsure it remained in "other".

The responses to the open questions on family influence were printed off, cut into strips and then sorted by the frequency in which respondents mentioned the nature of the influence on their decision making into broad categories. I was looking for evidence of the ways in which influence was exerted, looking for common themes. This was then re-sorted into more specific categories.

Kidd's paper (1984) was an important influence on this analysis where she looked at the influences of "significant others" within the wider community a term used by Woelfel and Haller (1971) as was Law's Community Interaction Theory (1981). Kidd created six categories of influence which some overlapped with Law's five categories. I was focussing on family so there was not one neat fit but I devised seven categories, 4 of which were taken directly from Kidd and Law or had overlaps with them.

Within the section "other people as models" several respondents made ambiguous statements such as "my family has a legal background." These were cross referenced with the choice of career sector in a previous question to ensure that they had picked the same career as the cited model and that they should be in this section.

The data was first analysed on a question by question basis – see ‘Chapter 4: Results’ – and then further analysis was carried out in ‘Chapter 5: Key Finding and Discussion’ to look for themes and the findings were related back to the theories.

Ethics

The nature of this research did not present a significant ethical dimension. However it was still important to consider both informed consent and confidentiality. Participants were given clear information on the purpose of the project in the initial email to enable them to make a voluntary rational judgement to participate and the consent form of the on-line survey made them aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Details were provided on how the information would be used and stored.

The research is looking at values which may be deemed as quite personal information, therefore it was important to ensure confidentiality and prevent any worries about this being divulged. There is a difference between the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality in research:

“Anonymity means that absolutely no identifying characteristics are recorded on the data and that it would be impossible for the researcher to figure out who contributed a given piece of data. Confidentiality means that although the researcher can figure out whose data are whose, within certain legal limits, the researcher promises never to share that information.” (Hoyle, Harris & Judd 2002: 59)

Email and IP addresses were not saved with the data so that individual responses could not be identified. Confidentiality is often given by social researchers as an ethical principle to protect the identity of participants. However, it can also encourage participation. Homan (1998) highlights research that has shown that the public is more likely to participate and to answer questions regarding sensitive information if confidentiality is given.

Chapter 4: Results

The survey went out on 24th November to all undergraduate and postgraduate students via the Careers student appointment system. According to data from SITS, the LSE student record system, the LSE student population for 2008/09 breaks down as follows: postgraduates 53% and undergraduates 47% (this excludes postgraduate research students, General Course students and intercollegiate students). The numbers of students per continent are as follows: Europe: 56%; Asia (inc. Middle East) 28%; N. America 12%; S. America 2%; Africa 2% and Australasia 1%.

The response rate of 17% (1,547) is reasonable but not high in relation to the research outlined in the methodology. This may mean that the topic was not of interest to the students or that it was seen as spam and not opened. The 90% (1,385) completion rate for the survey with few answers skipped would indicate that the survey was well designed to encourage completion.

The targeted follow up emails by continent worked well and the total respondents are almost in proportion to the actual population. But with Europe response rate lower and N. America higher, it could be said that the Europeans found the topic of less salience whilst the N. Americans found it higher.

Notes

1. In the following results section 'Asia (inc. Middle East)' will be written as Asia. The following sector abbreviations have been used in places: Government, public sector and policy (GPP); International Development and NGOs (ID); Investment Banking (IB); Other Banking and Financial Services (OB) and Management Consultancy (MC).
2. As there were limited respondents from Africa (27) and Australasia (19) there has been limited analysis for these two continents.
3. It was not possible to calculate chi-squared tests for statistical significance for the results by continent sections below as there were too many cells with expected counts of zero or less than 5. Therefore the possibility that some of the reported differences only occurred by chance cannot be ruled out.

Background of Respondents

The 1385 respondents broke down into Masters 64%, 1st year undergraduates 12%, 2nd year 10% and 3rd year 14%. The gender split was 42% male to 58% female.

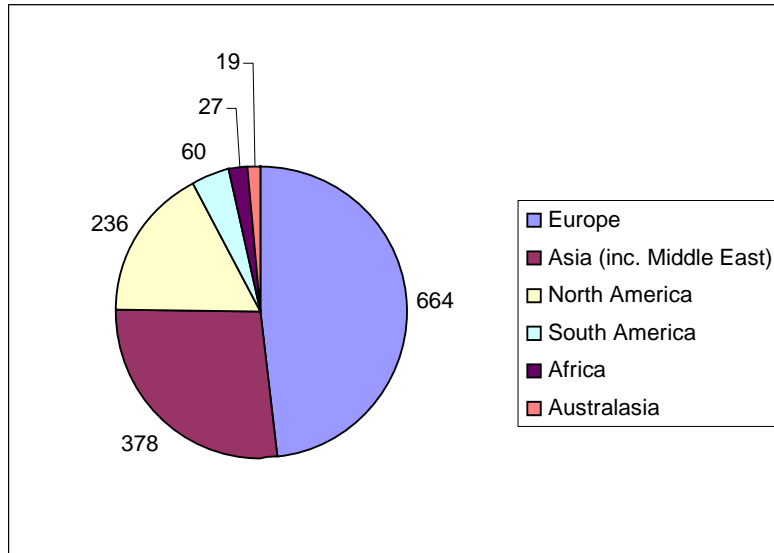


Figure 1: Respondents by Continent

The breakdown by continent is shown in Figure 1. Europe represented just under half of the respondents (48 %), with just over a quarter from Asia (27%) and N. America accounted for 17%, S. America 4%, Africa 2% and Australasia 1%. This is similar to the breakdown of the full LSE student population although Europe is slightly under-represented with N. and S. America slightly over-represented.

Ethnic Origin	%
White	55
Black - Caribbean	<1
Black - African	<1
Other black background	<1
Asian - Indian or Pakistani or Bangladeshi	11
Asian - Chinese	14
Other Asian background	4
Hispanic	3
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	<1
Mixed - White and Black African	<1
Mixed - White and Asian	3
Other mixed background	3
Other ethnic background	2
Not known	<1

Table 1: Ethnicity

Almost 60% of the respondents gave ethnic origin as White. The next biggest were Asian-Chinese (14%) and Asian-Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi (11%); see Table 1.

When asked about their parents' level of education where "Parents" includes natural parents, adoptive parents, step-parents or guardians, 83% responded that their parents had higher education qualifications, such as a degree, diploma or certificate of higher education. There was some variation between continents: Europe 82%; Asia 81%; N. America 88%; S. America 93% and Australasia 71%, Africa 74%;

Decision Making Status

Students were asked what stage they had reached in thinking about which career sector they were most likely to enter after the completion of their academic studies. Over half (56%) had decided upon the sector whereas 41% were undecided and only 3% had not thought about it.

There was not much variation by continent as Figure 2 shows. The proportion of decided students from Asia (61%) and S. America (65%) were somewhat higher than average while the proportion of undecided Africans (52%) was above average. There was little to divide N. America, Europe and Australia on decided status (55%, 54% and 53%) and undecided status (44%, 43% and 42%).

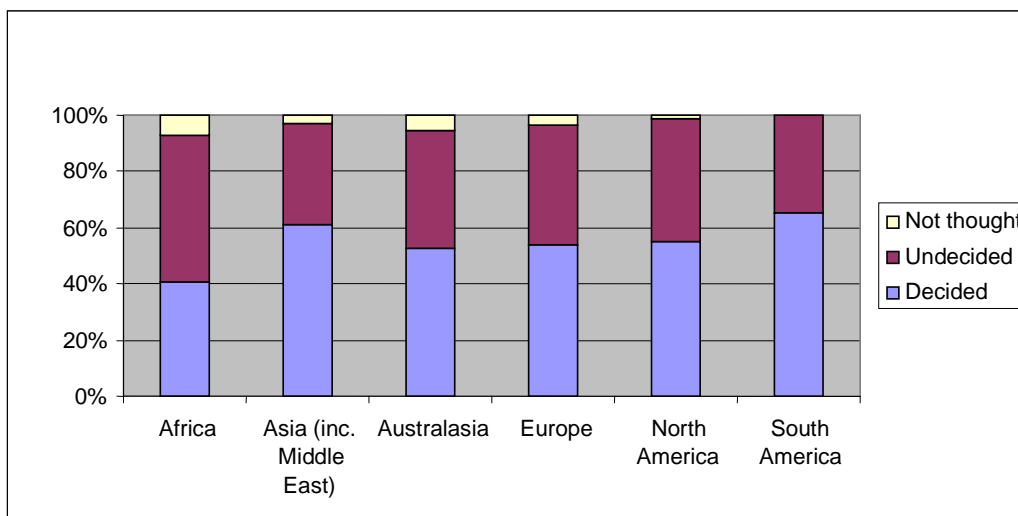


Figure 2: Career decision making status by continent

Students' Choice of Career Sector

Decided and undecided students were asked which career sectors they were most likely to enter

Decided Students

777 students answered the question "Which career sector do you most likely expect to enter?" Overall, the biggest sector selected was GPP chosen by almost a fifth.

The top 5 is as follows:

1. Government, public sector and policy 20%
2. Investment banking 13%
3. International development and NGOs 12%
4. Management consultancy 11%
5. Other banking and financial services 10%

Results by Continent

The most popular sectors by continent are highlighted in Table 2. GPP was the most popular sector for respondents from Europe, N. America and S. America. In comparison IB was top for Asian students and OB for African students.

Factors	Africa	Asia	Austral.	Europe	North America	South America
Gov. public sector and policy	x	4	1 =	1	1	1
Investment banking	4 =	1	1 =	2	4 =	3
International development & NGOs	4 =	5	1 =	3	2	2
Management consultancy	2 =	3	x	4	3	6 =
Other banking & finance	1	2	x	6 =	6	6 =
HE teaching/ research	2 =	7	1 =	6 =	4 =	4

Table 2: Top 3 sectors chosen by decided students by continent

There appear to be some differences when comparing individual continents to the results for all students (see appendix 1 for full breakdown):

- IB and OB were more popular with Asian students than for all students (18% and 17% as opposed to 13% and 10%)
- GPP and ID sectors were less popular with Asian students (13% and 9% compared to 20% and 12% on average)
- IB was lower for N. Americans (8%) than for all other students (13%) including Europeans (12%)
- ID was higher for Australasia (20%), S. America (18%) and N. America (15%) than all students (12%)

Undecided Students

562 students answered the question “Which career sectors do you think you are most likely expect to enter” selecting 3 choices. Just over half (54%) included GPP of one of their top 3 choices. Top 5 as follows:

1. Government, public sector and policy 54%%
2. International development and NGOs 41%
3. Management consultancy 31%
4. Business and management 24%
5. Media 19%

IB is not in the top 5 in the undecided sector despite being second in the decided section

Results by Continent

As Table 3 shows Australasia, Europe, N. America, S. America and Africa have almost identical top 3 choices (GPP, ID and MC) while the top 3 for Asia are quite different (MC, IB, BM).

Media appears in the top 5 for Europe, N. America and Australasia (open market economies) but is lower down the rankings for S. America, Asia and Africa (emerging economies). (see appendix 1 for full details)

A direct comparison between the results for decided and undecided respondents is difficult because decideds chose one sector and undecided 3 sectors. However, it is possible to compare the overall rank.

Factors	Africa	Asia (inc Middle East)	Austral.	Europe	North America	South America
Gov. public sector and policy	2	4 =	1	1	1	1
International development & NGOs	1	6	2	2	2	2
Management consultancy	3	1	3	3	3	3
Business & management	4	3	x	5	5	5
Investment banking	8 =	2	x	10	12	x

Table 3: Top 3 sectors chosen by undecided students by continent (students selected 3)

There are some similarities between the two groups. GPP was the top choice overall and for Europe, N. America and S. America. ID was in the top 3 overall and for Europe, S. America, N. America and Australia. MC appeared in the top 4 overall and for most continents.

There are also some differences. IB was more popular with decided students (second most popular) than with undecided students (8th). The exception here is Asian students where IB was the highest ranked choice for decided students and second for undecided.

Influences on Choice of Sector

Students were asked what or who they thought would influence their choice and asked to rank a top 3

Decided Status

774 students responded to this question. Looking at first choices only (see Figure), the top 3 were:

1. Personal interests 61%
2. Direct exposure 11%
3. Your own assessment of abilities/skills 11%

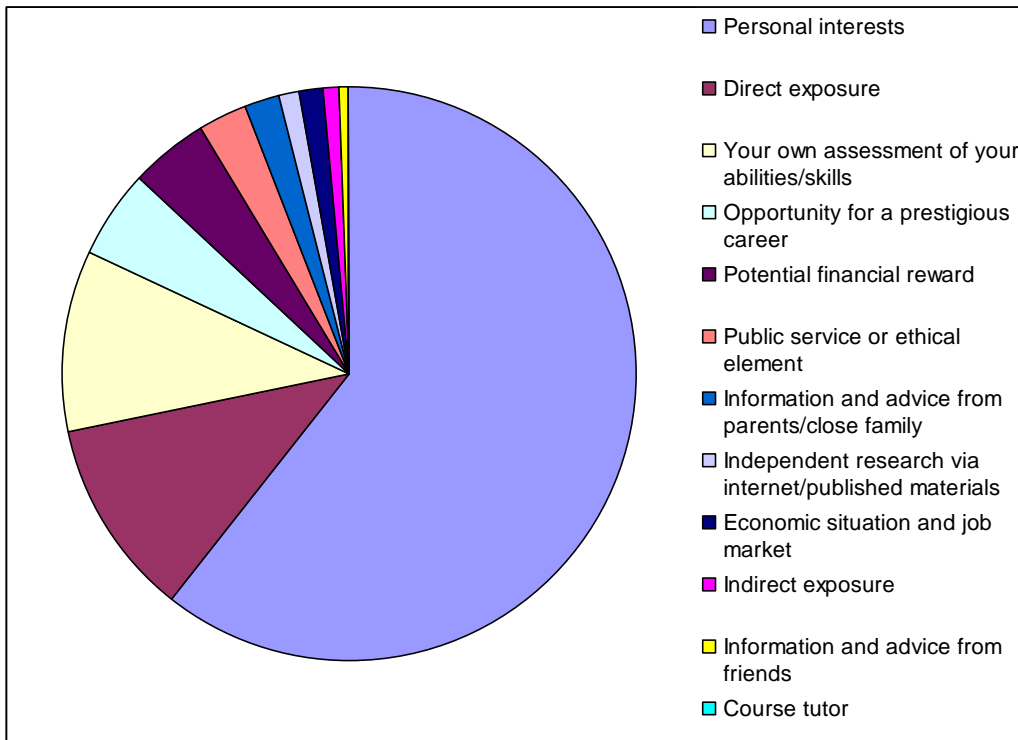


Figure 3: Decided students' influences on sector choice (based on 1st choice)

The importance of personal interests is further emphasised by the fact that 83% of decided students included it in their 3 choices. The other factors rating highly based on students' three choices were own assessment of your abilities/skills (52%), direct exposure (40%), opportunity for a prestigious career (31%), potential financial reward (21%) and public service or ethical element (19%).

Results by Continent

The results by continent are quite consistent when looking at first choice only. Personal interests is the highest for all continents with your own assessment of skills/abilities and direct exposure always appearing in second or third.

However, there is less uniformity when looking at the results based on students' three choices and there would appear to be a relationship between factors influencing choice of sector and continent of origin.

A selection of the data is shown in Figure 4. The examples below all highlight differences between individual continents and the overall averages:

- Direct exposure: higher for N. American students (54%) and lower for Asian students (31%) than all students (40%)
- Indirect exposure: higher for Asian students (12%) and lower for N. American students (1%) than all students (7%)
- Information and advice from parents/close family: lower for N. Americans (7%) compared to all students (11%)
- Potential financial reward was lower for N. American students (14%) compared to all students (21%)
- Public service or ethical element: lower for Asian students (12%) than all students (19%)
- Opportunity for a prestigious career: higher for European students (34%) than all students (31%)
- Africa (18%) and South America (15%) ranked the economic situation and labour market higher when compared to all students (10%)

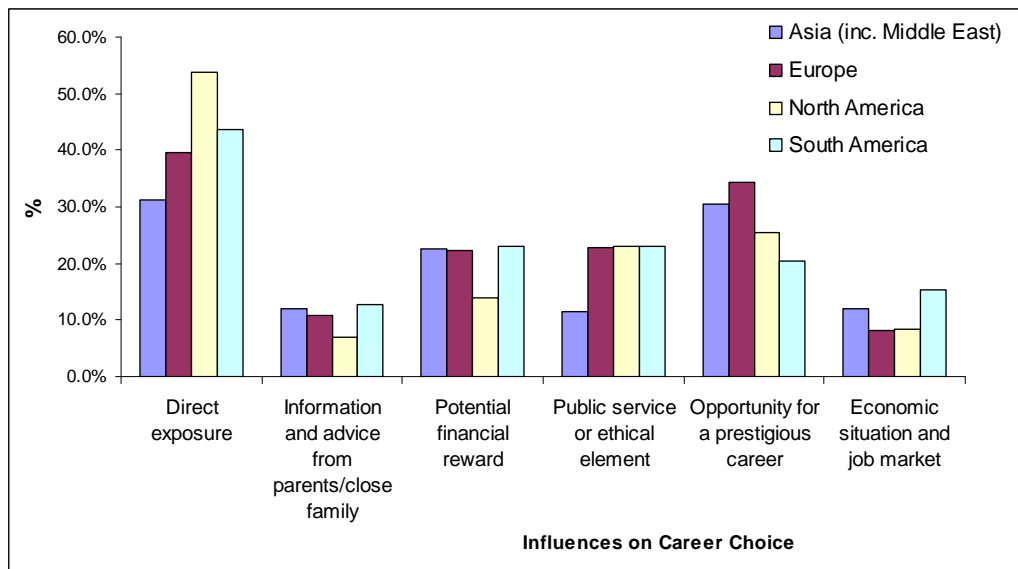


Figure 4: Decided students' influences on sector choice (selected influences)

Undecided Status

562 respondents answered this question. Looking at first choices only (see Figure 5), the top 3 were:

1. Personal interests 63%
2. Your own assessment of abilities/skills 13%
3. Direct exposure 8%

Looking at all 3 choices made by undecided students the results are very similar to those made by decided students. The top 6 influences are the same that is the three above plus opportunity for a prestigious career, public service or ethical element and potential financial reward.

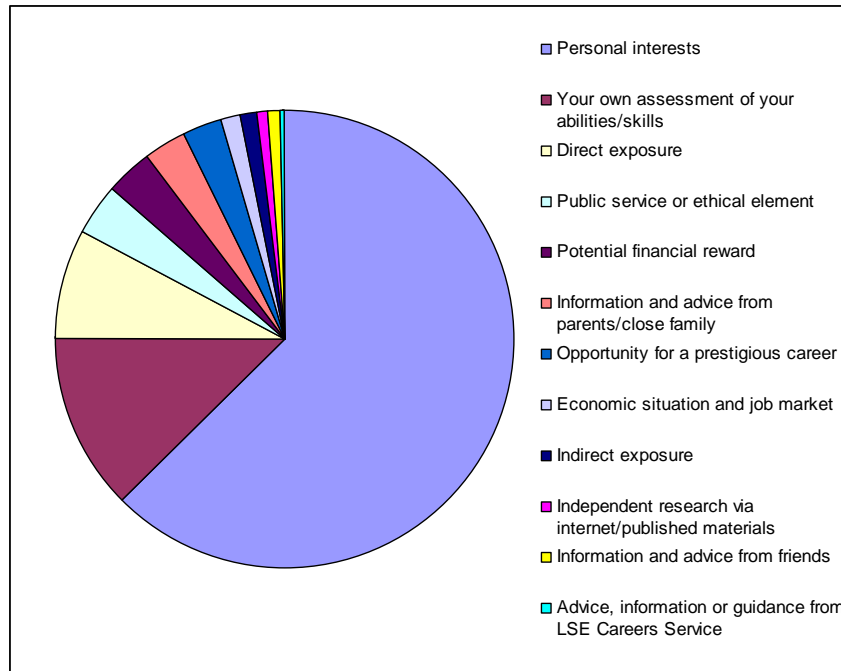


Figure 5: Undecided students' influences on sector choice (based on 1st choice)

Results by Continent

Whilst there are some differences, there is little variation between the continents for most of the influences. This is true when looking at 1st choice only and all 3 choices. So overall in this case there does not seem to be a relationship between factors influencing choice of sector and continent of origin

There are five differences that deserve a mention (see figure 6):

1. Information and advice from parents/close family: higher for Asian students (20%), lower for S. American students (5%) than all students (14%)
2. Potential financial reward: higher for Asian students (24%) lower for N. American students (14%) and all students (19%)
3. Public service or ethical element: lower for Asian students (8%) than all students (20%)

4. Economic situation and job market: higher for Asian students (19%) and S. American (24%) compared to all students (12%) with Europe and N. America both below average
5. Direct experience: lower for Asia students (23%) compared to all students (30%)

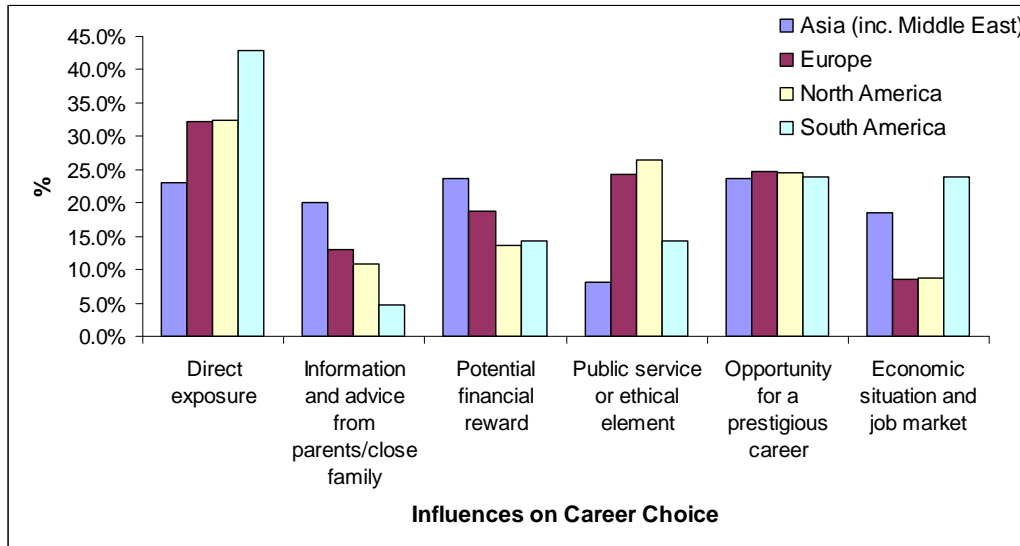


Figure 6: Undecided students' influences on sector choice (selected influences)

These differences are generally consistent with the differences found for decided students. In particular in both cases fewer N. American students chose parents/family or financial reward, fewer Asians chose public service and more Asians chose economic situation as important influences.

Not Thought About It Status

Only 41 responded and therefore there was a limited amount of data. Only 2 continents had 10 or more respondents: Asia and Europe both ranked personal interests as their first choice which is consistent with the findings for decided and undecided students.

Influences On Why a Sector Was Previously Rejected

There were 778 respondents in this section. The top 4 influences were identical by first choice and all three choices:

1. Negative expectations of work conditions: 53% overall; 1st choice 27%

2. Own assessment of your abilities/skills: 42% overall; 1st choice 21%
3. Direct work exposure activities such as internships/work experience/work shadowing: 29% overall; 1st choice 18%
4. Economic situation and labour market: 23% overall; 1st choice 8%

Results by Continent

The 1st choice negative expectations were consistent across all continents. Below this there was some variation though not much:

- A difference for advice and information from parents/close family members matched the findings for “Influences on choice of sector.” Information and advice from parents/close family was higher for Asian students (12% overall; 1st choice 4%), lower for N. American students (5% overall; 1st choice 0.7%) than all students (9% overall; 1st choice 2%).
- African students ranked the economic situation the highest (40%) against the overall rating (23%). North America (18%) and Europe (23%) were below the overall rating.

The top ranked rejected sector was investment banking, in second other banking and financial services and in joint third government, public sector and policy and legal sector.

Factors Influencing Employer Choice

1,373 respondents answered the question “What is of most importance to you in selecting your employer?” with three choices. Figure 7 shows the full breakdown.

The top 5 were:

1. Intellectual challenge: 51%
2. Good work/life balance: 45%
3. Competitive starting salary: 33%
4. Opportunity for advancement: 24%
5. International travel: 20%

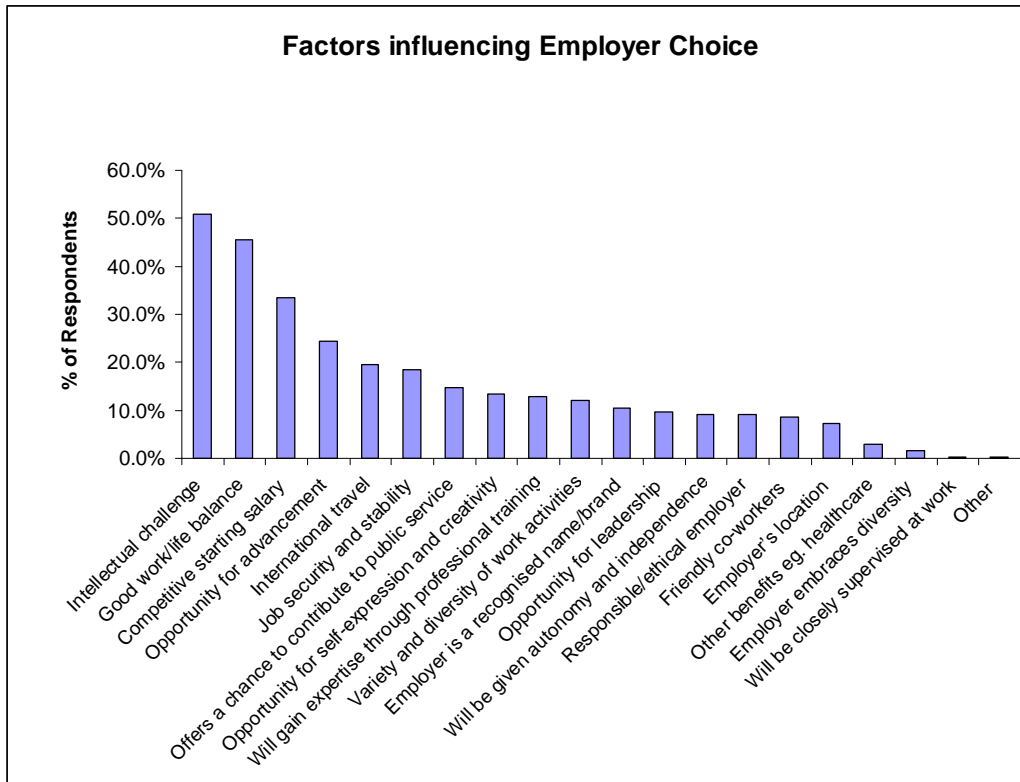


Figure 7: All students' influences on employer choice (students selected 3)

Results by Continent

As can be seen in Table 4 the top 3 influences are fairly consistent across the continents matching the distribution in Figure 6. Although for Asia the top 3 influences had almost identical respondent numbers. However there were some clear variations:

- Competitive starting salary was the top influence for Asian students (44%) compared to 13% (ranked 8th) for South America and 15% (ranked =6th) for Australasian students and 33% (ranked 3rd) overall
- International travel was ranked as less important for South American students (8%, ranked 13th) and Asian students (15%, 8th) compared to all respondents (20%, 5th)
- Employer as a recognised name/brand was ranked as more important by Asian students (18%, ranked 6th) compared to 10% (ranked 11th) for all students
- Job security was rated more highly by African students (30%, ranked 4th) and Asian students (27%, ranked 4th) compared with all students (18%, ranked

6th). Australasia (10%), and Europe (14%) were lower than the all student figure.

Factors	Africa	Asia (inc. Middle east)	Austral.	Europe	North America	South America
Intellectual challenge	2 =	3	1	1	1	1
Good work/life balance	1	2	2	2	2	2
Competitive starting salary	2 =	1	5	3	3	8
Opportunity for advancement	5 =	5	3 =	4	4 =	7
International travel	5 =	8	3 =	5	4 =	13
Offers a chance to contribute to public service	8	10 =	6 =	9	6	3

Table 4: Top 3 influences on employer choice by continent (students selected 3)

The findings were then examined in more detail to look at whether there are differences within continents. Asia was selected for two reasons: firstly, there was plenty of data for individual countries (6 with more than 10 respondents) and secondly some of the previous findings highlighted possible differences between Asia and the other continents.

Factors	China	Hong Kong	India	Malaysia	Pakistan	Singapore
Intellectual challenge	3	4	1 =	4	2 =	2
Good work/life balance	1	2	3	1	2 =	1
Competitive starting salary	2	1	1 =	3	2 =	3
Job security and stability	6	3	4	2	1	5

Table 5: Top 3 influences on employer choice for selected Asian countries (students selected 3)

The results are shown in Table 5. Firstly, intellectual challenge, good work/life balance and competitive starting salary are still ranked highly for all individual countries. Job security and stability which was ranked 4th for Asia (27%) as a whole appeared higher for some countries for example Pakistan (1st with 52%) and Malaysia (2nd with 46%). Looking at individual countries there are quite wide variations in for each influence. For example, competitive starting salary varies from

51% for India to 30% for Singapore. Job security and stability varies from 52% for Pakistan to 18% for China.

Further analysis was done to compare other subsets; these are shown in Table 6.

Factors	Germany	UK	Mexico	Canada
Intellectual challenge	1	2	3	1
Good work/life balance	2	1	2	2
Competitive starting salary	3 =	3	4	3 =
Opportunity for advancement	3 =	4	5	11 =
Job security and stability	7	6	1	5 =
International travel	5	10	8 =	3=

Table 6: Top 3 influences on employer choice for selected countries/ethnicity (students selected 3)

As with the Asian breakdown the most important factors are broadly the same and again there are some individual variations between the groups. For example, 72% of Germans chose intellectual challenge compared to 46% in the UK and 58% of Mexicans chose job security and stability compared to 18% of Canadians.

Reviewing a Job Offer

There were 1,373 respondents to the question “Who would you review a job offer with?” with three choices. Figure 8 shows the full breakdown. The top 3 were:

1. Parents: 46%
2. Partner/spouse: 18%
3. No-one - decide on my own: 18%

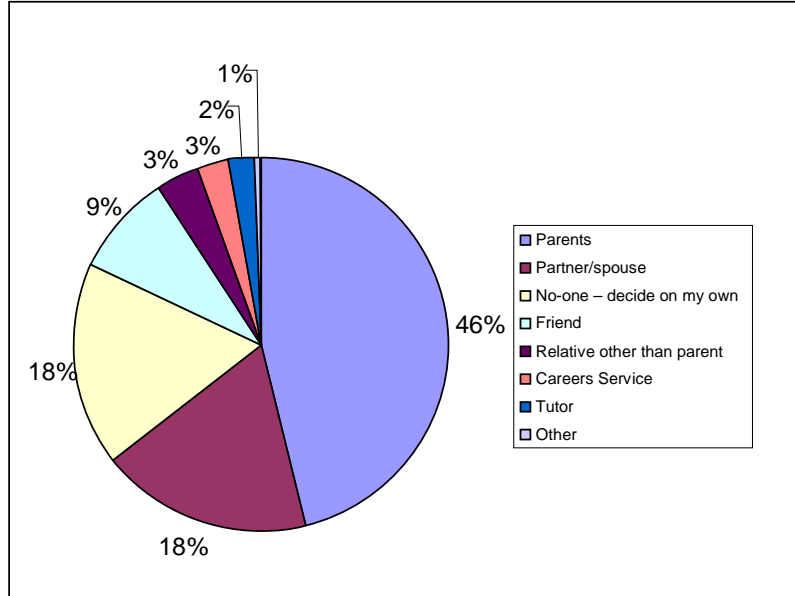


Figure 8: Who students would review a job offer with by continent (1st choice only)

Overall parents were included by 80% of students. Although friends were only chosen by 9% of students as their first choice they were selected by almost two thirds as one of their three choices.

Results by Continent

Factors	Africa	Asia (inc. Middle east)	Austral.	Europe	North America	South America
Parents	1	1	2	1	1	1
Relative other than parent	=5	7	5	7	5	6
Partner/spouse	3	4	3	3	3	3
Friend	2	2	1	2	2	2
Tutor	7	6	6	6	=6	5
Careers Service	=5	5	7	5	=6	7
No-one – decide on my own	4	3	4	4	4	4
Other	8	8	8	8	8	8

Table 7: Top 3 influences on who students would review a job offer with by continent (students selected 3)

As table 7 shows there is a lot of consistency across the continents parents, partner/spouse and friends are the top 3 for all continents except Asia where decide on my own replaces partner/spouse as the third choice.

The Asian students were looked at in more detail again by examining the results for the 6 countries with more than ten respondents to see if there were differences between countries. While there were some minor differences on the whole individual countries matched the overall picture for Asia. For example in the decide on my own category for 5 countries it was the third most popular answer (ranging from 37% for China to 46% for Malaysia) but for Singapore it was the fourth most popular with only 30%.

“Other” Category

26 students chose “other” for this question. 8 were reassigned to the original categories and the remaining 18 broke down as follows:

- Mentor/life coach: 6
- Colleagues and employer (present and past): 5
- Someone directly related to the industry: 3
- Pastor: 2
- God: 1
- President of Alumni Association: 1

Information and Advice from Parents/Close Family

The students selecting family as an influence when asked about career sector choice (including rejected sectors) were asked for further details in an open response question.

Overall there were 180 responses² 21 of which were taken out as they were not relevant, leaving 159 which broke down as follows: Europe - 80, Asia - 43, North America - 23, Africa - 5, South America - 5, Australasia - 3. These proportions by continent were not greatly different to the proportions to the survey as a whole.

The family influence broke down into parents (28%), the broader unspecified term family (27%), father (15%), mother (5%), brother (5%), extended relatives (5%),

² The figures in this section are for responses rather than students as some students will have answered the rejected sector question as well as the main question.

partner (2%) and family friend (2%). A further 11% of the responses were not detailed enough to be able to be categorised.

The responses are examined below under the themes 7 outlined in the methodology.

Direct Influence

The number of respondents in this category was 5; 4 Asian, 1 European. The respondents in this section are given very little choice in their decision of career and the choice of words reflects this:

“I have been *persistently informed* by my parents that a legal profession is a good start to a professional career, *irrespective* of whether it is something I wish to pursue in the long term.”

“Then I realised it's a basic and fundamental difference in work and life attitude (perhaps between the old and the young, or between Chinese - where my parents and I grew up and Western - where I have been studying since Year9...I lost the courage and dream of becoming what I wanted to be. I understand it should not have been this way, *but I had no choice*. I couldn't leave my father alone. Earning good salary and *keeping my family happy*, why not.....”

Expectations

The number of respondents in this category was 26; 14 European, 10 Asian, 2 N. American. In this section the influence of family goes beyond advice and guidance of the supportive nature as the language is quite directive in nature for example “had an influence on *steering me away* from what I had thought to be my strengths” and “*they liked* the job opportunities, *they liked* the professional environment” “.... my family is also somewhat *expectant* of the type of job I will get.”

Occasionally the respondents contradict themselves by saying on the one hand that they have freedom but then on the other hand putting a restriction upon it:

“Even though they would support anything I would end up doing, I feel an *implicit obligation/favour* to do well in life.”

“My parents give me the complete flexibility and freedom to decide on a career path. They only wanted me to do something that *will be prestigious* and rewarding, not necessarily in monetary terms.”

Prestige appears in a further 4 responses and seems to be the underlying main driver in each response.

Information About the Self

The number of respondents in this category was 9: 4 European, 3 North American, 2 Asian. Respondents in this category give the impression that they give precedent to their family members' assessment of their character over their own. The emphasis is on the family matching the respondents to roles based on their judgement. The following is an example of the most directive:

“My family encouraged me to take up law as they saw the potential of becoming a good lawyer in me. After *judging* my qualities they decided that law was very suitable for my kind of personality and *convinced me* about the same.”

The implication is the student has been swayed by family with its use of the word “convinced.”

Examples of the less directive again including one which influenced career change:

“They know me well and can tell me honestly what I would or would not be good at.”

Whilst this influence does not appear to be so directive as the former it does still hand over the knowledge of the self to significant others rather than relying on their own self assessment; the student is passive and compliant in the process.

Family Business

The number of respondents in this category was 7; 3 European, 3 Asian, 1 N. American. It was difficult to discern in this category whether the decision to enter the family business was a voluntary one or an expectation as 4 respondents just stated “family business.” However, 3 respondents inferred that it was not their choice for example:

“There was *lot of pressure* in terms of doing well and start earning as our family business of manufacturing clothes was not doing well and my family wanted some security on whom they can rely upon in case the business is shut.”

Other People as Models

The number of respondents in this category was 65: 36 European, 12 Asian, 9 N. American, 3 S. American, 4 African, 1 Australasian. Respondents cited family members as models for their own career choice identifying with them in some way and/or acknowledging the influence of exposure to a sector and the insight into the reality of the role enabling an informed choice. The majority of the respondents were explicit about this influence and identifying with the family member:

“My father was an investment banker and *following in his steps* seemed the most logical thing to do, given that he and I share similar interests.”

Some respondents are explicit about what constitutes a positive influence and use words such as “inspiring, “lifestyle”, “enjoy”, “rewarding” for example:

“Several of my family and boyfriend’s family work in similar areas of work to mine and *find it rewarding.*”

Others are clear about what led them to reject a career:

“A family member is in this career, and I thought what he does sounds really boring.”

Support and Facilitation

The number of respondents in this category was 44: 21 European, 12 Asian, 6 N. American, 2 S. American, 2 Australasian, 1 African. The overall impression is of a supportive environment with words such as “advice”, “discussion”, “conversations”, “encouraging” “happy” and “no pressure” occurring throughout the responses for example:

“Pure advice with good intentions, *no pressures.*”

“Their influence is when *we all discuss* the matter together and they give their opinions. They *do not try to convince me* to do anything or force me into anything.”

There is one explicit reference to culture:

“My *parents aren’t typical Chinese* “get the job that earns the most money but we don’t care if you don’t have a life” parents, so I’ve been encouraged to pursue something that I enjoy.”

Consideration Given to Partner

Three respondents fell into this category: 2 N. American, 1 European. All 3 would make their career choice based on location in relation to partner ie. making the decision in conjunction with partner’s career:

“I will likely be married when entering the job market and so will be making my decision based largely on where my *future husband and I choose* to live.”

Summary

The first four categories can be categorised as collectivist with the first being the most directive (3 of the four respondents are Asian). In the next 3 categories the respondents split between Asia, N. America and Europe. In the last 3 categories which are more individualist the same 3 continents appear but Africa and S. America only appear in these.

Chapter 5: Key Findings and Discussion

Influences on Career Decision Making

This section highlights the key findings for all students irrespective of background. In the literature review there were two influences which were seen as important to all students in their career decision making; financial security and parents.

Financial security was the third most important factor for students when choosing an employer, chosen by a third of them. It was also selected by a fifth of students as an influence on career sector choice which would tend to support previous research highlighted earlier.

Parents were very important for students when reviewing a job offer in fact the most important reason; 80% of students selecting it and 46% having it as their first choice. This fits in with previous studies which show parents are an important influence in students' decision making. However, parents were found to be much less important to students when making their initial sector choice with only 14% of students who had decided upon their career and 11% of undecided students selecting parents. It is not possible to explain this anomaly based on the survey data.

Personal interests were identified as the most important influence. Just over 60% of students had it as their most important influence while 83% (decided) and 86% (undecided) of students had it in their top 3. This topic will be returned to later in a discussion about the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures.

Similarities and Differences Between Continents

Decisiveness (maturity)

Both collectivist cultures and socio economic background are cited as enabling students to be more pro active in planning their career.

The survey showed that South Americans and Asians were the more focussed in terms of decision making in having the higher number of decided students. What cannot be said from the findings is whether this is due to culture or socio economic

background but it is interesting to note that South America also had the highest number of respondents with parents with a higher level of education.

Africa had a higher than average proportion in the undecided category and the lowest number of respondents with parents with a higher level of education. It may be possible that the education equates with a lower socio economic background and so less proactivity in career decision making. The literature review also noted that living in unstable countries may also hinder career decision making which could be a factor here.

There was very little difference between Eurocentric continents: Europe, North America and Australasia.

“Good” Careers

“Good” careers are those in the literature review on collectivist cultures based on and status/prestige or financial security. In the findings there are some differences between continents around financial reward with Asians generally seeing it as more important than others. Similarly, in students’ choice of career sector the high paying banking and finance sector was more important to Asians. When looking at prestige in sector choice and working for a recognised brand name in employer choice there were few differences between the continents and Asia did not stand out. However, no clear pattern emerges when looking at the other collectivist continents.

In the Eurocentric review salary was also found to be important whilst prestige is not. However, in the findings N. American students included salary as a moderately important factor but less important to them than for Asian students. The pattern amongst other Eurocentric continents was not consistent.

Public Service

There are fairly consistent findings for the importance of public service. The Eurocentric cultures and S. America see it as more important than Asia throughout the findings. For example, these students are more interested in working in government, public sector and policy or international development and NGOs. Similarly Asian students place less importance on public service in influencing their sector and employer choice. For Africa the results are mixed which tends to fit with the literature review where students were interested both in giving something back to society and careers that offer prestige and financial reward.

Job Security and Labour Market

There is a connection between the questions on job security and the labour market as the latter may affect the former. The literature review shows that job security would appear to be a factor influencing career decision making in Eurocentric cultures but not necessarily in collectivist cultures.

In contrast the results do not support this. Europe and N. America were least concerned with the labour market as an influence on career sector choice. This is also true for Europe and N. America when looking at the influence of job security on choice of employer. Furthermore, Asia consistently ranked the economic situation and job market higher than Eurocentric continents. There was less consistency for Africa, S. America and Australasia but Africa does on more than one occasion rank job security as an important influence which may be linked to the literature on volatile countries.

Personal Interests

The literature review found that personal interests were a top influence in Eurocentric cultures. The research into collectivist cultures was such that you would not expect personal interests to be an important factor in career sector choice. However, this research found that personal interests appeared as the top influence for all cultures.

In collectivist cultures there was a chance that personal interests could have been selected if it were in a student's personal interests to satisfy the family; however, in that case you would expect them to also select parents/family/relatives as an important influence which they did not. Therefore, I believe in this case personal interests can be seen in a more individualistic sense.

Direct Exposure (Work Experience)

Influence of work experience was ascertained through the question on direct exposure. The literature review found that work experience was a top influence in Eurocentric cultures. In the findings direct exposure was an important factor overall but with some variation between continents with N. America students and European students, to a lesser extent, seeing it as more important than Asian students which would fit with the literature. However, the same is not true for South America. Although there is less data the results align more with the Eurocentric continents than Asia.

Work Life Balance

In the literature review work life balance was an influential factor on career choice for Eurocentric continents. Whilst the findings agree with this they also show that work life balance is an important factor for all continents. In fact, it was the second most important factor for all continents except for Africa where it was first. This contrasts with the literature on collectivist societies which does not highlight work life balance as being important.

Family and Community Influences

Community influences include family, friends, course tutors and careers service. In the findings the influence of the family was by far the most important

Collectivist cultures rate the influence of parents/family highly in the literature review. In addition individualist cultures also rate parents highly in an advice and support role, an influence that appears to be on the increase. There is a consistency in the results for a job review where parents are the most important influence in all continents except Australasia where they also figured highly. The importance of partner/spouse was also consistently high across all continents. While there are some differences the overall picture is one of uniformity.

However, parents and close family were a less important influence on sector choice but again this was consistently the case across continents. For the majority of students from each continent the parents had a supportive role rather than directive. However, there were a higher proportion of Asian students in the directive categories but no respondents from other collectivist continents.

Other community influences were not found to be very influential in the results. Of these groups friends were the most important in particular when reviewing a job offer.

Differences Within Continents

Further analysis was carried out for one question to see if there were any differences between individual countries. The amount of analysis was limited as there weren't many countries with sufficient data.

On the whole most countries match the overall picture. However, there were some notable differences in the relative importance of some factors, highlighting

differences within regions and similarities between countries that have no geographical connection. A good example of this is job security and stability. Students from Pakistan and China rated this influence very differently as did students from Canada and Mexico. While more than half of Pakistani and Mexican students included it, less than one fifth of Chinese and Canadians did.

Individualist and Collectivist

Overall there are more similarities than differences in the findings between the respondents from the different continents. For example personal interests was consistently the most important factor influencing sector choice.

Although the evidence is somewhat limited some of the differences in career decision making between individualist and collectivist cultures found in the literature review have been supported. For example, the findings provide some support to the research that suggests collectivist cultures are less interested in public service careers. However, this is only for Asia rather than all the collectivist continents. Other research has been contradicted by the findings. For example, the greater importance of job security to individualistic societies was not supported with Europe and North America being the least concerned.

There has been little research into South American students and career decision making. In the literature South America is seen as a collectivist society but some of the findings put them closer to individualist cultures. For example, they are more interested in careers with social/public service aspects.

Career Development Theories

The literature review concentrated on whether the theories acknowledged the influence of culture through focussing on individualism and collectivism. This research has found that overall culture does not appear to be a determining factor in career choice as the students have common influences. On the surface this would mean that person-environment fit, developmental and structural theories with their lack of cultural application would be fitting. The focus on personal interests, skills and abilities would appear to fit with the first two but the additional influence of extrinsic factors such as salary would not. In addition, the direct influence of parents would not fit as the theories are based on the autonomy of the individual. The structural theory would not fit as students cited direct experience of being an

important influence implying that students can make a career choice based on their own experience rather than what is available in the labour market. Social influence theories do acknowledge a range of factors but the emphasis Law's theory puts on the community's influence in determining career choice is too strong in relation to LSE students. However, Lent, Brown and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1996) acknowledges all of the influences covered by the first three theories and in addition puts emphasis on socio-economic factors which may be of importance, but it has not been comprehensively evaluated in practice.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Research Questions

The research set out to examine the student population of the LSE and answer the following questions:

- What influences the career decisions of LSE students?
- Do the students fit with the research into career decision making and culture?
- Are there clear cut differences between continents or is there more common ground than we might expect?
- Are the current career decision making theories applicable?

The influences on the careers decisions were ascertained through the research and clearly identified. The students do not fit into the current research into cultures as they do not split into the individualist and collectivist categories as outlined in the literature review. For example, a small number of students do appear to be influenced by the direct influence of the family in the way that the collectivist research describes but it is important to note that some of these students are from so called individualist cultures therefore the concept is not appropriate for LSE students. There are not clear cut differences between the continents and even where a continent does appear to rate an influence more highly this is not repeated by a country breakdown. Overall the students from the different continents have a lot more in common in terms of decision making than differences.

The research has demonstrated that trying to pigeonhole LSE's international students and applying cultural stereotypes to them as the categorisation of the literature review did, is not appropriate. Whilst there are many commonalities between the students and the research has given an overview into the factors of importance to LSE students, it is worth noting that just as viewing the students from the same continent as homogenous would be dangerous neither can the LSE student population have a stereotypical LSE student:

“By ignoring within-group variability, one runs the risk of perpetuating cultural uniformity assumptions or stereotypes that take the general form all persons from Group X think and act the same way.” (Lent and Worthington, 2000:379)

The findings support the LSE case for not tailoring a workshop programme by nationality. Careers advisers in one to one interactions would do well to leave any preconceptions of a student at the door and to see each one as an individual and to look beyond just cultural differences and look at the bigger picture:

“Therefore, we need to be much more sensitive to the economic, political, and cultural differences that, despite globalization, continue to make for huge differences in people’s career experiences.” (Thomas and Inkson, 2007: 465)

It is more important that careers advisers don’t use just one theory but pull on the range of theories available to them, as students on an individual basis may fit with some but not others.

Limitations

This research is based on a convenience sample at a single institution and so there can be no generalisations made about the wider population. It is not even possible to generalise within the LSE as the sample was not proportionately representative. The use of a questionnaire also meant that students understanding of terms such as “personal interests” could not be clarified and so students may be ascribing a different meaning to words than those of the researcher. The inability to clarify responses in the open questions, especially those around family influence, have meant that in the categorisation of responses, weighting may have been given to words which may not have meant in the manner that they have been interpreted.

Another drawback of the questionnaire is that it attempted to cover ground beyond the scope of the research which may be of use to the Careers Service. The additional variables and questions added in made the task of analysing the data and picking out key points more difficult and so interesting points may have been missed. However, the study and its findings are still of importance as they have provided data from a group that had not previously been studied by continent. The findings, therefore, provide a good basis for understanding the influences on the career development of LSE students and provides information that could assist with the planning of service delivery.

Further Work

The study has raised important questions. Whilst cultural background needs to be considered, if it is not the most important influence on LSE students, what is? The literature review raised the issue of socioeconomic status as being important in future research and this would be an interesting area to look at; does social class transcend cultural influences? Should career development theories put the emphasis on open market economies versus emerging economies as opposed to individualism versus collectivism? Law reflects upon the economic changes that led to the first ideas on careers guidance developed by Parsons:

“Significant features of that change are the following: a) economy becomes science and technology dependent; b) families become less extended, more nuclear, and c) population becomes more mobile, less rooted in contained communities. Relatives – important sources of informal and traditional “guidance” – are therefore less able to help...”(Law, cited in Thomas and Inkson, 2007: 298)

Further research into socio-economic influences on the career decisions of LSE students through one to one interviews, would give a fuller picture of the effects globalisation is having on LSE students.

References

- Ali, L. and Graham, B. (2007). Theoretical Background to Counselling. In: Lendrum, S. (ed.) *The Counselling Approach to Careers Guidance*. East Sussex: Routledge.
- Arbona, C. (1995). Theory and Research on Racial and Ethnic Minorities: Hispanic Americans. In: F.T.L. Leong (ed.). *Career Development and Vocational Behaviour of Racial and Ethnic Minorities*. New Jersey: Mahwah,
- Arbona, C. (1996). Career Theory and Practice in a Multicultural Context. In: M.L. Savickas and W.B Walsh (eds.). *Handbook of Career Counselling Theory and Practice*. California: Davies-Black Publishing.
- Arbona, C. and Novy, D.M. (1991). Career aspirations and expectations of black, Mexican American, and white students. *Career Development Quarterly*, 39 (3): 231-240.
- Arnold, J. (1997). *Managing Careers Into the 21st Century*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.
- Arthur, N. (2005). Building from diversity to social justice competencies in international standards for career development practitioners. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 5: 137-148.
- Arulmani, G., Van Laar, D. and Easton, S. (2003). The influence of career beliefs and socio-economic status on the career decision-making of high school students in India. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 3: 193-204.
- Aycan, Z and Fikret-Pasa, S. (2003). Career choices, job selection criteria, and leadership preferences in a transitional nation: the case of Turkey. *Journal of Career Development*, 30 (2): 129-144.
- Brown, M.T., Yamini-Diouf, Y. and Ruiz de Esparaza, C. (2005). Career Interventions for Racial or Ethnic Minority Persons: a Research Agenda. In W.B Walsh and M.L Savickas (eds.). *Handbook of Vocational Psychology*. New Jersey: Manwah.
- Bryman, A (2008). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: OUP.
- Cheatham, H.E. (1990). Africentricity and career development of African Americans. *Career Development Quarterly*, 38 (4): 334-347.

- Chia, Y.M., Koh, H.C. and Pragasam, J. (2008). An international study of career drivers of accounting students in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong. *Journal of Education and Work*, 21 (1): 41-60.
- Counsell, D (1996). Graduate careers in the UK: an examination of undergraduates' perceptions. *Career Development International*, 7 (1): 34-41.
- Couper, M.P (2000). Web surveys: a review of issues and approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64: 464-94.
- Couper, M.P., Traugott, M.W and Lamias, M.J. (2001). Web survey design and administration. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 65: 230-53.
- Curtis, P. (2008) Education: parents allowed to take charge of university applications. *Guardian*, 20th August.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/20/choosingadegree.clearing>
 (accessed 23 March 2009)
- Daire, A.P., LaMothe, S. and Fuller, D.P. (2007). Differences between black/African American students and white college students regarding influences on high school completion, college attendance, and career choice. *Career Development Quarterly*, 55: 275-279.
- D'Ardenne, P. and Mahtani, A. (1999). *Transcultural Counselling in Action*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Davies, M.B. (2007) *Doing a successful research project*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Falconer, J.W. and Hays, K.A. (2006). Influential factors regarding the career development of African American college students: a focus group approach. *Journal of Career Development*, 32: 219-233.
- Gould, S. (1980). Need for achievement, career mobility, and the Mexican-American college graduate. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 16: 73-82.
- Greenbank, P. and Hepworth, S. (2008). *Working class students and the career decision-making process: a qualitative study*.
http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/hecsu.rd/research_reports_278.htm
 (accessed 15 November 2008)

- Guichard, J. and Lenz, J. (2005). Career theory from an international perspective. *Career Development Quarterly*, 54: 17-28.
- Hall, L.H. (1972). Personality variables of achieving and non-achieving Mexican Americans and other community freshmen. *Journal of Educational Research*, 65: 224-228.
- Hodkinson, P. and Sparkes, A.C. (1997) Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18 (1): 29-44.
- Hofstede, G.H. (1984). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Homan, R. (1998) *The Ethics of Social Research*. London: Longman.
- Hoyle, R.H., Harris, M.J. and Judd, C.M. (2002). *Research Methods in Social Relations*. USA: Thomson Learning Inc.
- Kidd, J.M. (2007). Career Counseling. In H. Ganz and M. Peiperl (eds.). *Handbook of Career Studies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kidd, J.M. (2006). *Understanding Career Counselling: Theory, Research and Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kidd, J.M. (1984). Young people's perceptions of their occupational decision-making. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 12: 25-38.
- Kim, B.S.K., Atkinson, D.R., and Umemoto, D. (2001). Asian cultural values and the counseling process: current knowledge and directions for future research. *Counseling Psychologist*, 29 (4): 570-603.
- Koc, E.L. (2008) NACE Research: the oldest young generation – a report from the 2008 NACE Graduating Student Survey. *Journal (NACE)*: 23-28.
<http://www.naceweb.org/public/koc0508.htm>
(accessed 23 March 2009)
- Law, B. (1981) Community interaction: a "mid-range" focus for theories of career development in young adults. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 8: 142-158.

- Lebo, B.R. and Harrington, T.F. (1995). Work values similarities amongst students from six countries. *Career Development Quarterly*, 43 (4): 350-363
- Lee, K-H. (2001). A cross-cultural study of the career maturity of Korean and United States high school students. *Journal of Career Development*, 28 (1): 43-57.
- Lent, R.W. and Brown, S.D. (1996). Social cognitive approach to career development: an overview. *Career Development Quarterly*, 44 (4): 310-322.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., Talleyrand, R., McPartland, E.B., Davis, T., Chopra, S.B., Alexander, M.S., Suthakaran, V. and Chai, C-M. (2002). Career choice barriers, supports, and coping strategies: college students' experiences. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 60: 61-72.
- Leong, F.T.L. (1991). Career development attributes and occupational values of Asian American and White American college students. *Career Development Quarterly*, 39 (3): 221-232.
- Leong, F.T.L. and Gim-Chung, R.H. (1995) Career assessment and intervention with Asian Americans. In: F.T.L. Leong (ed.). *Career Development and Vocational Behaviour of Racial and Ethnic Minorities*. New Jersey: Mahwah,
- Leong, F.T.L. (2002). Challenges for career counselling in Asia: variations in cultural accommodation. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50: 277-284.
- Leong, F.T.L and Austin, J.T. (1998). An evaluation of the cross-cultural validity of Holland's theory: career choices by workers in India. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 52: 441-455.
- Leong, F.T.L and Chou, E.L. (1994). The role of ethnic identity and acculturation in the vocational behaviour of Asian Americans: an integrative review. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 44: 155-172.
- Leong, F.T.L and Hartung, P.J. (2003). Cross-Cultural Career Counseling. In Bernal, G., Trimble, J.E., Burlew, A.K., and Leong, F.T.L. (eds.) *Handbook of Racial & Ethnic Minority Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Leung, S.A. (2002). Career counseling in Hong Kong: meeting the social challenges. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50: 237-245.

Lightbody, S.G., Nicholson, S., Tait, L. and Walsh, D. (1998). Talking about subject choice at secondary school and career aspirations: conversations with students of a Chinese background. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 26(2): 195-207.

Luzzo, D.A. (1992). Ethnic group and social class differences in college students' career development. *Career Development Quarterly*, 41: 161-173.

Ma, P-W. W. and Yeh, C.J. (2005). Factors influencing the career decision status of Chinese American youths. *Career Development Quarterly*, 53: 337-347.

Markus, H.R. and Kitayama, S. (1991) Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2): 224-253.

Mau, W-C. (2000). Cultural differences in career decision-making styles and self-efficacy. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 57: 365-378.

Mau, W-C. (2004). Cultural dimensions of career decision-making difficulties. *Career Development Quarterly*, 53: 67-77.

Midgley, S. (2008) Graduates eager to show they are up to the job. *Times Online*, 17th September.

http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/career_and_jobs/top_100_graduate_employers/article4768278.ece

(accessed 23 March 2009)

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Nasser, R.N. and Abouchdid, K. (2005). *International Journal of Education and Vocational Guidance*, 6: 167-180.

Nesbary, D.K. (2000). *Survey Research and the World Wide Web*. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

NGRF (2004) A four fold categorisation of theories relevant to guidance. *National Guidance Research Forum*.

<http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/impprac/ImpP2/Imppthpp/impptheppfour>

(accessed 12 April 2009)

Nilsson, J.E., Flores, L.Y., Berkel, L.V., Schale, C.L., Linnemeyer, R.M. and Summer, I. (2007). International career articles; a content analysis of four journals across 34 years. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 70: 602-613.

Parnham, T.A. and Austin, N.L. (1994). Career development and African Americans: a contextual reappraisal using the Nigrescence construct. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 44: 139-154.

Patel, S.G., Salahuddin, N.M. and O'Brien, K.M. (2008). Career decision-making self-efficacy of Vietnamese adolescents: the role of acculturation, social support, socioeconomic status, and racism. *Journal of Career Development*, 34: 218-240.

Patton, W (2000). Changing Career: the Role of Values. In A. Collin and R.A.Young (eds.). *The Future of Career*. Cambridge: CUP.

Paton, G. (2008). Foreign students double in a decade, says Universities UK. *Telegraph*, 20 September.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2963365/Foreign-students-double-in-a-decade-says-Universities-UK.html>

(accessed 23 March 2009)

Pekerti, A.A. (2008). The interdependent family-centric career: career perspective of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia. *Career Development Quarterly*, 56: 362-377.

Plant, P. (2003). The five swans: educational and vocational guidance in the Nordic countries. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 3: 85-100.

Pope, M., Cheng, D.W. and Leong, F.T.L. (1998).The case of Chou: the inextricability of career to personal and social issues in a multicultural context. *Journal of Career Development*, 25 (1): 53-64.

Pope, M., Musa, M., Singaravelu, H., Bringaze, T. and Russell, M. (2002). From colonialism to ultranationalism: history and development of career counseling in Malaysia. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50: 264-276.

Rivera, A.A., Anderson, S.K., and Middleton, V.A. (1999). A career development model for Mexican-American women. *Journal of Career Development*, 26(2): 91-106.

- Roberts, K. (1977) The social conditions, consequences and limitations of careers guidance. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 5 (1): 1-9.
- Salazar-Clemena, R.M. (2002). Family ties and peso signs: challenges for career counselling in the Philippines. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50: 246-256.
- Savickas, M. L. (2000). Renovating the Psychology of Careers for the Twenty-First Century. In A. Collin and R. Young (eds.). *The Future of Career*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Savickas, M.L (2007). Occupational Choice. In H. Ganz and M. Peiperl (eds.). *Handbook of Career Studies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Shea, M., Winnie Ma, P-W. and Yeh, C.J. (2007). Development of a culturally specific career exploration group for urban Chinese immigrant youth. *Career Development Quarterly*, 56: 62-73.
- Sheehan, K. (2001). Email survey response rates: a review. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Education*, 6(2).
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol6/issue2/sheehan.html>
(accessed 10 September 2008)
- Sheehan, K. and Hoy, M. (1999). Using E-mail to survey internet users in the United States: methodology and assessment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Education*, 4(3).
<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol4/issue3/sheehan.html>
(accessed 10 September 2008)
- Shih, S-F. & Brown, C. (2000). Taiwanese international students: acculturation level and vocational identity. *Journal of Career Development*, 27 (1): 35-47.
- Stebleton, M.J. (2007). *Career Development Quarterly*, 55: 290-312.
- Sue, D.W. and Kirk, B.A. (1972). Differential characteristics of Japanese-American and Chinese-American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 20: 142-148.
- Sultana, R.G. and Watts, A.G. (2008). Career guidance in the Middle East and North Africa. *International Journal of Education and Vocational Guidance*, 8: 19-34.

- Super, D. E. (1981). Approaches to Occupational Choice and Career Development. In Watts, A.G., Super, D.E., and Kidd J.M. (eds.) *Career Development in Britain*. Cambridge: Hobsons Press.
- Swanson, J.L. and Fouad, N.A. (1999). *Career Theory and Practice: Learning Through Case Studies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Tang, M., Fouad, N.A. and Smith, P.L. (1999). Asian Americans' Career Choices: a path model to examine factors influencing their career choices. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 54: 142-157.
- Tatsuno, R. (2002). Career counseling in Japan: today and in the future. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50: 211-217.
- Taylor, J., Harris, M.B. and Taylor, S. (2004). Parents have their say ...about their college-age children's career decisions. *Journal (NACE)*: 16-20.
<http://www.jobweb.com/parents.aspx?id=1949>
 (accessed 23 March 2009)
- Thomas, D.C. and Inkson, K. (2007). Careers Across Cultures. In Gunz, H. and Maury, M. (eds.). *Handbook of Career Studies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Tomlinson, M. (2007). Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market. *Journal of Education and Work*, 20:4: 285-304.
- Triandis, H (1994). *Culture and Social Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Triandis, H (1995). *Individualism and Collectivism*. Colorado: Westview Press, Inc.
- Universum (2008). *Universum Student Survey 2008: British Edition; University Report – LSE vs. Total*. Universum for LSE; not available publicly.
- Yang, E., Wong, S.C., Hwang, M. and Heppner, M.J. (2002). Widening our global view: the development of career counselling services for international students. *Journal of Career Development*, 28 (3): 203-213.
- Zhou, D. & Santos, A. (2007) Career decision-making difficulties of British and Chinese international university students. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 35:2: 219-235

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sector Choice by Continent

Sector	All (n=777)	Africa (n=11)	Asia (n=230)	Austral. (n=10)	Europe (n=357)	North America (n=130)	South America (n=39)
Advertising, marketing and PR	2%	0%	1%	0%	3%	1%	3%
Business and management	5%	0%	4%	0%	7%	5%	0%
Economics and political risk	2%	0%	3%	10%	1%	2%	3%
Education/teaching (non HE)	1%	0%	<1%	0%	2%	2%	0%
Entrepreneurship	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Environment and regeneration	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%	0%
Government/public sector and policy	20%	0%	13%	20%	22%	25%	31%
HE teaching/research	7%	18%	5%	20%	7%	8%	13%
International development and NGOs	12%	9%	10%	20%	11%	15%	18%
Investment banking	13%	9%	18%	20%	12%	8%	15%
Legal profession	8%	9%	9%	10%	9%	6%	5%
Management consultancy	11%	18%	14%	0%	10%	14%	3%
Media	4%	0%	4%	0%	4%	4%	3%
Other banking and financial services	10%	36%	17%	0%	7%	6%	3%
Social enterprise and CSR	<1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%
Other	3%	0%	2%	0%	3%	2%	3%

Sector choice by continent for decided students (students selected 3 choices)

Sector	All (n=562)	Africa (n=14)	Asia (n=136)	Austral. (n=8)	Europe (n=284)	North America (n=103)	South America (n=21)
Advertising, marketing and PR	13%	14%	10%	13%	15%	14%	10%
Business and management	24%	29%	35%	13%	20%	19%	29%
Economics and political risk	12%	0%	10%	13%	15%	8%	10%
Education/teaching (non HE)	8%	14%	9%	0%	8%	5%	10%
Entrepreneurship	8%	14%	11%	0%	6%	11%	10%
Environment and regeneration	6%	7%	4%	0%	8%	5%	5%
Government/public sector and policy	54%	57%	33%	75%	61%	61%	52%
HE teaching/research	17%	7%	10%	38%	20%	12%	33%
International development and NGOs	41%	64%	25%	75%	43%	50%	43%
Investment banking	17%	7%	36%	0%	11%	10%	0%
Legal profession	10%	0%	13%	0%	8%	15%	0%
Management consultancy	31%	36%	43%	38%	25%	24%	38%
Media	19%	7%	10%	0%	23%	22%	10%
Other banking and financial services	17%	0%	33%	13%	12%	14%	14%
Social enterprise and CSR	10%	7%	13%	13%	9%	16%	24%
Other	3%	7%	4%	0%	5%	2%	0%

Top 5 sectors chosen by undecided students by continent (students selected 3 choices)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

The full questionnaire from surveymonkey.com appears below. It was not possible to add the Appendix 2 heading as it was a PDF.

