From Play to Work: An Exploratory Study on the Casual Leisure Experience and Career Adaptability in Life and Career Planning of Non-engaged Young People in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong Children & Youth Services
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1.1 The researcher

My experience:

• Working in settings of outreaching team, overnight outreaching social work, school social work and youth centre services.

• Head up a Jockey Club funded project (2015 to 2020) which aims at providing career and life planning services (CLAP) to secondary school students and non-engaged young people.

• CLAP aims at building up a service model of career and life planning (CLP) for the young people in Hong Kong. Seldom did the services put in the community service for non-engaged young people.
1.2 The problem

- Most career development theories are built on education needs that focus on individual adaptation and learning in the environment.

- Current research on career planning and development is mostly run by Western scholars whose target is University students.

- Existing studies on the career development of young people primarily focus on the unemployment situation, are quantitative in nature, with a focus on outcomes and problem-solving models.
1.2 The problem

有HEA才有發展：12個失學青年「HEA的奇幻時刻」

西元2016年07月08日 週五  青年事務  csc
文: 蕭裕均 (理工大學應用社會科學系助理教授)

2014年夏天，我訪問了12位脫離主流升學軌跡的青年，得到一個意想不到的發現：3個月至1年在家無所事事的hea的機會，供他們提供一個十分重要的「奇幻時刻」，令他們開始反思自己的處境，繼而主動思索自己未來的升學或就業安排。而更令我驚訝的是，職訓局的職員和社工都告訴我，通常能順利完成職訓局課程、而沒有中途退學的，往往會是這種曾在家無所事事一段日子的青年；而那些在中學退學後立即入讀課程的，退學率往往比前者高很多！

每天，當我們都被堆積如山的工作和任務迫得發瘋時，都十分渴望可以有機會hea一下。對已踏足職場工作的成年人來說，很多人可能會選擇請假出外旅遊，逃離香港這「加速世界」，到生活節奏較慢的社會走一走、充充電。我們之所以會這樣做，皆因我們知道：身體就如橡筋般，拉得太緊，不單會令自己精神緊張，身體容易出現毛病，還會隨波逐流，迷失自我。
1.2 The problem

- The leisure and play activities occupy most of the time of these young people when they are not engaged in study and/or work. There is a general observation that eventually these non-engaged young people will take up employment.

- Limited research has been identified in the areas of young people’s leisure spending patterns, experience of school to work transition, and the formation of career identity in process from play to work.

- There is no existing practice of life and career planning for non-engaged young people and empirical studies that adequately guide social work practice in Hong Kong.
2. Literature Review

Chinese culture on career development
• need to integrate Western career development theories into Chinese culture. (Cai, Gua, Shi, Guo, Liu, et al., 2015)
• relational support was found to be an antecedent of career exploration (Cheung & Arnold, 2010, 2014).
• while Asian countries place emphasis on group conformity, the culture of Western countries emphasizes individuality (Chan & Lo, 2014).
2. Literature Review

Leisure Studies
(Stebbins, 1997, 1982, 2013)

- Play
- Games
- Serious Leisure
- Interest
- Casual Leisure

Expanded notion of Work
(Wong, 2015)

- Work
- Non-paid Job
- Life
- Paid Job
- Career
2. Conceptual Framework

- Leisure Experience
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Concern
- Control
- Play

- Career Exploration
- Career & Life Management
- Self Understanding & Development
- Engagement
- Work

Engagement

Career & Life Management

Self Understanding & Development

Leisure Experience

Career Exploration

Play

Work

Curiosity

Concern

Confidence

Control
3. Research Methodology

Research question: “how do the leisure experiences of unengaged young people facilitate the development of career adaptability?”

Four objectives:

- to understand non-engaged young people’s subjective leisure experiences in their multiple school to work pathways;
- how they formulate their life and career plans;
- identify their career adaptabilities and how they develop for their leisure experiences;
- identify and bridge the turning points for the social work practice model.
### 4.1 Findings

#### Background information of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School to work transition</th>
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<th>Stage of planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Left school at F.4 → work → unemployed</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>jobless</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Left school at F.3 → working irregularly → young mother</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>young mother / housewife</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pakhon</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Left school at F.1 → working irregularly → unemployed</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>jobless</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Nicho</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Left school at F.6 → work for 2 years → working irregularly → unemployed</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>young mother / housewife</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lok</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Repeated schooling → Left school at F.2 → work at hair salon → working irregularly → unemployed</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>working irregularly</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Left school at F.1 → not working nor studying → employment training</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Pre-employment training</td>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Left school at F.6 → working part-time → studying Yi Jin → unemployed</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Planning to resume studying and working</td>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Gavin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Completed F.6 → Open University → quitted after Year 1 → working irregularly as Clerk → selling fruit juice</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Working part-time</td>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Left school at F.1 → not working nor studying → attended cosmetic training → not working → committed crime and imprisoned → working irregularly</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Working irregularly</td>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Simmy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Left school after F.6 → changing job frequently → Youth Employment Training Program → child care internship</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Engaging in internship</td>
<td>Self-understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.2 Findings

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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Completed HKDSE → Associate Degree → dropped at Year 1 → working irregularly → unemployed</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Engaging in E-sports training</td>
<td>Career exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Finished secondary school → working for a short period of time → vocational training in watch design → training in hair dressing → working irregularly</td>
<td>6 - 9 months</td>
<td>Engaging in different training to equip for a better job</td>
<td>Career exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Completed F.4 study → doing part-time job → struggling between interest development or continuing to study → prepare to further his studies while maintaining his interests</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Will continue studying</td>
<td>Career exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>CY</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Stop schooling at F.1 → unemployed → working irregularly → prison / detention centre → working irregularly → drugs rehabilitation centre → job training</td>
<td>Over 4 years</td>
<td>Working in a job tasting program</td>
<td>Career exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Completed HKDSE → dropped the study at Vocational Training College → unemployed → full time working</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Career exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Eason</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Stop schooling at F.1 → changed to study at 3 schools → living at Small Group Home → working in casual jobs → job training → stable working</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Finished F.5 education → unemployed → addicted in drug taking → residential rehabilitation centre → full time working</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hiu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Left school at F.3 after repeated the third time → unemployed and not in training → continue to study in Yi Jin while working in part-time → completed secondary school study → working in full time</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Completed secondary school education → working irregularly → full time job for a year</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Dick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>unstable schooling in upper secondary schools → working part-time while studying in schools → Completed F.6 education at 21 → working full time</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Stable working</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Findings

Identification of themes (N)
Developing categories of information from themes
5. The stories

Interconnecting the categories
Building stories that connect the categories
5.1 Theoretical propositions (1)

The work-play fusion

- Play
- Work
- Serious Leisure
- Casual Leisure
- Life
- Career

Career Adaptabilities
5.2 Theoretical propositions (2)

Integrated Framework for Phases of Life and Career Development
5.3 Theoretical propositions (3)

Strategies in the transition from play to work

- Deeper engagement of solitary experience for regaining energy
- Self-discovery from leisure and play
- Drawing resources from social connection
- Direct engaging with life and career decision making
- Developing problem solving for life course adversities
- Role repositioning at point of retreat
- Full of curiosity and playful attitudes in games of life and career
- Stepping out of their comfort zone towards an adventure
6.1 Implications for social work practice

**Social Worker**
- Sensitivity to casual leisure activities
- Recognition of value and role of leisure to career development

**Social Work Practice**
- Intervene in unemployment with a developmental perspective
- Alternative intervention strategies
- Comprehensive models to cater different needs
- Co-construction of life and career of young people

**Young People**
- Resilience
- Awareness of opportunity
- Generation of hope
6.2 Contextual and Intervening conditions
6.3 Conclusion

Themes identified

- Casual Leisure Experience
- Phases of career intervention

Career adaptability

- 4 Dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, confidence and curiosity
- Categories of casual leisure experience
- Transitional strategies from play to work

Conceptual framework

- Expanded notion of play to work
- Integrated Framework for Phases of Life and Career Development
- Different level of intervention in career development of young people
- 5th C in career adaptabilities

Personal Reflection

- Role of leisure and play
- Cultural sensitivity

- Meaning and interpretation of career adaptability in local context
- Environmental constraints
Thanks!

And salute to the young people in an era of change....