The relationship between narrative identity and career interests, aspirations, expectations and plans

A) RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT

UK careers education is in crisis and understanding the aetiology of individual differences in why young people make particular career choices is key to developing an effective system of careers education. Narrative identity represents the stories we tell about ourselves. A study of narrative identity in secondary school or university students will enhance our understanding of individual differences in career interests, aspirations, expectations and plans. It is also important to explore whether different groups tell different stories about themselves, and whether this is reflected in their career plans. The rich data generated by this project should make a useful contribution to UK careers education policy and practice.

B) REFERENCES THAT SHOULD BE READ (if you do not have access to these, please email me)


Kray, L. J., George, L. G., Liljenquist, K. A., Galinsky, A. D., Tetlock, P. E., & Roesse, N. J. (2010). From what might have been to what must have been: counterfactual thinking creates meaning. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 98*(1), 106 - 118.


C) RESEARCH AIMS / QUESTIONS

*Are aspects of narrative identity related to career interests, aspirations, expectations and plans?*

In addition to this main question one or more of the following (or alternatives) could be addressed:

- Does narrative identity, as it relates to future plans, differ by group (e.g. sex, SES or achievement)?
- Do university students with non-traditional qualifications tell different stories about themselves than students with traditional academic qualifications and, if so, does it matter?
- Could a narrative identity based intervention (e.g. focused on counterfactual thinking) raise aspirations for some young people?

D) METHODS

The first challenge is to select an appropriate method of data collection (e.g. Life Story Interviews, written narratives or see the work of members of this Danish group for work using some alternative approaches http://psy.au.dk/en/research/research-centres-and-units/conamore/); and the second is to select the most appropriate aspects of NI to focus on (e.g. agency, coherence, growth goals, redemption etc).

**Participants:** You will recruit a sample of ~100 young people (Year 11 or Undergraduate) willing to take part in a face to face life story interview. Alternatively, you could recruit a larger sample of...
young people willing to provide you with a written account of their stories, or take a timeline / participant-rated approach as used by the Aarhus group (see link above).

**Measures:** You will create a narrative identity-focused interview schedule (or an alternative for written accounts). You will also develop a questionnaire using published measures of vocational interests, aspirations, plans and expectations, as well as demographic or background factors (please specify measures in your proposal).

**Analysis:** The rich qualitative data you gather will be coded and transformed into a series of quantitative Narrative Identity variables e.g. agency/growth goals/coherence. Their associations with vocational variables, and possibly group differences, will be tested statistically.