The Validity of Socially Constructed Career Information

James P. Sampson, Jr., Debra S. Osborn, Jaana Kettunen, Pei-Chun Hou, and Adam K. Miller

Florida State University

Program Presented at the NCDA Global Career Development Conference
Chicago, IL
July 2, 2016
Presentation Outline

• Introduction
• Characteristics of Quality Career Information
• The Validity of Career Information
• Socially-Constructed Career Information
• Options for Accessing Socially-Constructed Career Information
• Examples of Socially-Constructed Career Information
• Potential sources of Socially-Constructed Career Information Invalidity
• Implications for Practice and Research
Introduction

• Making an informed occupational, educational, training, or employment choice is dependent on having adequate knowledge of available options.

• Options knowledge helps:
  – Motivate individuals to exert the effort needed to make a decision
  – Clarify what is important in terms of individuals’ values, interests, skills, and employment preferences
  – Generate and evaluate options
  – Implement a decision
Introduction

• The **delivery of career information** is a common element in the provision of self-help to individuals and practitioner-assisted career services to clients.

• A key challenge is the potential delivery of **invalid career information** that has been created by individuals and widely distributed.

• Purpose of this presentation is to examine
  – Potential sources of socially-constructed career information invalidity
  – Implications for practice in helping individuals make best use of socially-constructed career information
Characteristics of Quality Career Information

• “Career information should be accurate, current, developmentally appropriate, relevant, specific, understandable, and unbiased” (Association of Career Resource Professionals, 2016b, p. 1)

• NCDA standards for the preparation of text (1992a), video (1992b), and software based (1991) career information emphasize the importance of information accuracy, comprehensiveness, currency, and lack of bias.

• Labor market information should be judged in terms of reliability, comprehensiveness, currency, and impartiality (Bimrose & Barnes, 2011)

• Evaluation criteria for social media-based information include accuracy, authority, comprehensiveness, logic, and verifiability (Kim, Sin, & Yoo-Lee, 2014).
The Validity of Career Information

- Career Information validity concerns the accumulated evidence as follows:
  - **Comprehensiveness** of career information
  - **Accuracy** of career information
  - **Relevancy** for the decision being made
  - **Understandable** to the decision maker

- Variability in career information validity has been an issue for some time and remains an issue today.
Socially-Constructed Career Information

- **Socially-constructed career information** is an example of social media that is created and delivered using various social media tools and social networking technologies.

- **Social media** is defined as a process whereby individuals and groups build a common understanding and meaning with contents, communities, and Web 2.0 technology (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Heinonen, & Halonen, 2010; Kolbitsch & Maurer, 2006).

- Varying **social media tools** are used for social networking (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), content creation and publishing (e.g., blogs), content sharing (e.g., Youtube), collaborative production (e.g., Wiki), microblogs (e.g., Twitter) and virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life).
Options for Accessing Socially-Constructed Career Information

- Individuals access socially-constructed career information either intentionally or unintentionally.
- In the **intentional mode**, individuals gain career information by using search features to find information in social media or post a question that leads to an answer or further discussion.
  - *Intentionality and proactivity* play an important role
- In the **unintentional mode**, individuals gain career information as they browse posts, discussion threads, social networking sites, or videos for some other purpose.
  - *Serendipity and reactivity* play an important role
- In both modes, using social media may lead individuals to follow an embedded link, or post or tweet a question, in order to gain further information.
Input from Participants
Examples of Socially-Constructed Career Information
Examples of Socially-Constructed Career Information

- A 19-year-old college sophomore is in the process of making an occupational decision that will impact her selection of courses in her accounting major.
Saber Tooth
Why would you want either? They both sound terribly boring.

Wolverine
Which one makes the most $$$

Thor
I don’t care about the starting $ as much as I do about travel and advancement.

Bucky B.
My dad’s an accountant and the most traveling he does is from his cubicle to the coffee room.

Mikayyyy
@micagomez0830

An accountant must know the cost of everything and the value of nothing.
Examples of Socially-Constructed Career Information

- An 18-year-old high school senior is in the process of making an educational decision between living at home and attending the local community college and living in a residence hall at a state college three hours distant.
3 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE CHOOSING A COLLEGE

There are many articles written, talks given and videos posted that are meant to help you decide where you should attend college. This is meant to be a short, fast and easy guide to making that decision. Who knows, maybe you have already decided on a college. If so, awesome! You are in the minority of future college students if you have your college plans all figured out at this point. If you have not decided where to get your college education, welcome to this blog post. Before you make your decision, there are several key things to consider. In fact, before you make a decision that will alter your life (no pressure or anything), you need to ask yourself these 3 questions.

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Pros and cons. I think I’d do it the same way. I don’t think I was ready to go on my own at first. Living at home saves a bunch of $$, and when I did move out, I think I was better prepared and a bit more mature. I didn’t feel the need to do some of the crazy things the other students were doing.

Saber Tooth
Yeah, but you missed out on some good times! 😃 I was absolutely ready to move out and get started with my life. I met a lot of cool people and we’re still tight today. Moving out forces you to really get connected and grow up quickly, but there’s other people doing it with you so you don’t feel alone.
Examples of Socially-Constructed Career Information

- A 35-year-old chemical engineer is in the process of making an employment decision after being encouraged by her employer to change positions from the research and development department to a position in the company as a line manager in agribusiness chemical production of fertilizers.
I hope you move! All of us are here!
Good riddance.

Thor
Wait - what?

Saber Tooth
I hope you don’t move! We’re all planning on leaving. Please consider staying.

Thor
I know – that the main reason I wouldn’t. But, there’s not as many opportunities here to do what I want to do. In fact, there aren’t any! But there is one back in my home town. It’d kind of be nice to be back there.

Saber Tooth
Don’t go away mad. Just go away.

Thor
You’re too kind. Really.

Saber Tooth
Ok. Fo realz

I hope you don’t move! All of us are here!

Thor
Yeah - you’re giving me A LOT to think about here!

olverine
What about you’re other job your boss offered you? It seems nice.

I’d you won’t have to have the hassle go moving.

MOVING not GO MOVING

Bucky B.
Isn’t it possible that you’re romanticizing how wonderful your hometown is? Maybe you should go visit for a few days and see if it’s as cool as you’re remembering it.
Potential Sources of Invalidity

Information invalidity can result from several potential causes, including:

- Intentional bias (with or without profit motive)
- Unintentional bias
- Restricted range of experience
- Out-of-date information
- Popularity bias
- Similarity bias
- Context deficiency
Intentional Bias

- **Intentional bias** involves a conscious attempt to influence the decisions and behavior of others by presenting inaccurate or partial information.
- Two subtypes exist based on the **motivation of the author of the information**.
  - The author is trying to influence others based on gratitude or revenge without any goal of making a profit.
  - The author represents a business and presents selected information that is most likely to motivate an individual to make a purchase.
Unintentional Bias

- **Unintentional bias** involves an unconscious attempt to influence the decisions and behavior of others by presenting inaccurate or partial information.

- For example, an individual may be unaware of prejudicial and stereotypical beliefs, that are regularly reinforced by his or her family or cultural group, and these beliefs inappropriately influence content he or she posts in discussion threads, social networking sites, blogs, and video posts.
Restricted Range of Experience

- **Restricted range of experience** involves the often unintentional overgeneralization of one individual’s experience with an occupation, education, training, or employment in a way that does not reflect the norm.

Example:

“I was a social worker and all I did was sit in my cubicle and fill out paperwork. I never interacted with any clients. This is not really a job for those interested in people.”
Out-of-Date Information

- **Out-of-date information** involves individuals presenting information from their experience that was valid in the past, but does not reflect the current reality in occupations, education, training, or employment.

Example:

“When I worked in sales the best tool I had was the telephone directory to identify potential clients for cold calling.”
Popularity Bias

- **Popularity bias** involves the perception that something is true simply because many people believe it to be true even when objective data may suggest otherwise.

- For example, an observation in text or video that supports an existing perception may be more likely to be reposted and subsequently more likely to be identified by search engines.
Similiarity Bias

- **Similiarity bias** involves the perception that something is true because the person or persons creating the social media are similar to the person reading or viewing the career information, even if the information is in fact false.

- For example, an individual may read a blog post and subsequent discussion thread from a person who looks similar and has a similar career problem, and subsequently make a decision based on information that may have been inaccurate and biased.
Context Deficiency

- **Context deficiency** involves a lack of supplemental data necessary to evaluate and use career information typically caused by size restrictions in data files transmitted by social media tools.

- For example, a short blog post may not provide enough detail on the creator’s educational and employment history to show the context for the conclusions reached about the lack of advancement opportunity in a particular occupation.
Implications for Practice

• So many tools, so little time, so many needs.
  – Requires a thoughtful response.

• Possible Practitioner initiatives:
  – Contribute to the information and digital literacy of clients
  – Develop skills in creating & using social media
  – Actively participate in social media to:
    • Expand & enhance service delivery
    • Continue professional growth
    • Connect with professional community
    • Discuss trends, tools, and ethics
  – Seek ongoing training
• Information literacy: recognize that information is needed, followed by the capacity to **locate**, **evaluate**, and **effectively use** the information.

• **Evaluating** - a core element of digital literacy. Involves capacity to:
  
  – Understand the nature of career information online,
  – Analyze the origins of the career information, and
  – Consider the usefulness of the career information

• We have a responsibility to teach individuals and clients to be critical consumers of all information.
Why Should We Be Active?

- Our clients are already out there.
- If not us, then who?
- Potential impact on future policy and continued funding:

If practitioners’ contributions in social media have demonstrated merit in promoting individuals’ career development, it is more likely that policy makers will continue supporting public funding for career services.
Implications for Research

In terms of descriptive research:

• What type of socially-constructed career information is available?
• What tools are used to deliver the information?
• Who is using the information?
• How are individuals using social media to inform their career decisions?
• What are the criteria that individuals use when determining which information sources are valid and which are not?
Implications for Research

In terms of best practices:

• Which strategies explicitly address the development of information literacy in individuals using self-help resources and in clients using career services?

• When and how do practitioners engage with individuals and clients to make effective use of socially-constructed career information?

• What professional standards show the most promise in helping practitioners implement socially-constructed career information into their work?
Implications for Research

In terms of evidence-based practice:

• Which types of socially-constructed career information contribute best to informed career exploration and decision making?
• What is the differential impact of self-help and practitioner-supported interventions using socially-constructed career information?
• How do individual and client characteristics influence the effectiveness of self-help and practitioner-supported interventions using socially-constructed career information?
Conclusion

• Practitioners have a key role in helping individuals and clients evaluate, use, and contribute to socially-constructed career information.

• “The collaborative and participatory potential of social media will not be fully realized, however, until individuals can effectively evaluate, use, and contribute to these sources.”

  (Kim, Sin, and Yoo-Lee, 2014, p. 454)

• Potential contribution of socially-constructed career information will be compromised if individuals, clients, and practitioners fail to differentiate between valid and invalid information.
For More Information

http://www.career.fsu.edu/Tech-Center