

The career constructions of hospitality students: A rocky road

ABSTRACT

This article presents the first set of data from an ongoing three-year longitudinal study, which explores how hospitality undergraduates develop a career identity during the course of their studies. Previous, generally quantitative, studies have discovered that many hospitality students choose not to follow a hospitality career after they graduate, however, these studies do not attempt to discover when their career intentions change, nor explain why. The New Zealand study on which the article is based, employed an interpretative, social-constructionist approach informed by intersectional theorising, using data collected from semi-structured interviews with first-year hospitality and culinary arts degree students. Career construction theory is used to interpret positive or negative career adaptive behaviours and effects are analysed at macro, meso and micro levels. A fusion of global and societal factors and personal characteristics influenced the construction of participants' professional hospitality identities. Age, gender and ethnicity-based intersections were evident in the ways students developed career adaptive behaviours. A significant contribution of this article is that negative workplace experiences appear to change students' motivation to follow a hospitality career because they reduce the individual's belief of being suited to the industry under current prevailing conditions. This finding can shed light on the type of student who is likely to eventually pursue a career in hospitality, the potential role of the internship in the development of career identity and the responsibility of employers. Employers should be aware and validate the idea of 'the hospitality career as a calling' by recruiting and developing highly motivated employees and facilitating the development of a professional hospitality identity in their younger workers.

KEYWORDS

hospitality career construction

career-adaptive behaviours

gender

age stereotyping

ethnicity

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the major global challenges faced by the tourism and hospitality industry is how to attract and retain highly educated and highly skilled employees. Kokt and Strydom (2014) suggest that among many issues that confront the sector, the shortage of professional industry-related skills is probably the most pronounced. Blomme et al. (2009) indicated that this was a primary challenge for the hospitality industry, a view supported by Walsh and Taylor (2007). Earlier studies, for example Hoque (1999), confirmed the historical nature of the problem and over the years academics and practitioners have expressed concern about the high proportion of tourism and hospitality graduates who decide not to work in the sector after graduation. Barron and Maxwell (1993) believed that the deficit was likely to become more pronounced as employment opportunities increased, significantly affecting the pipeline of future talent for senior positions. Since then, various researchers in different countries have investigated this phenomenon, with somewhat similar results.

Richardson's (2009) research in Australia discovered that students generally did not consider that working in tourism and hospitality could offer them the career attributes that they considered important. Richardson and Butler (2012) conducted further research in Malaysia, which supported the previous findings. In China, Lu and Adler's (2009) study revealed that approximately one third of respondents (31.6%) did not intend to work in tourism upon graduation. In a combined Dutch and United Kingdom (UK) university study conducted by Jenkins (2001), a key finding was that although 'a relatively high proportion of students from both institutions (44 per cent from Leeuwarden; 45 per cent from Huddersfield) will "possibly" be looking for a job in the hospitality industry after graduating', their desire to seek a job in the hospitality industry diminished 'considerably' as the degree progressed (2001: 18). Kim et al. (2016) further uncovered, upon asking whether students planned to work in the hospitality and tourism sector, that while 76% of their Korean and Taiwanese students agreed, only 58.7% of the Hong Kong cohort answered positively. Finally, Brown et al.'s (2015) research revealed somewhat polarized views: some graduates who had departed the sector stated that they would never return, yet, significantly, many demonstrated a strong passion for the hospitality industry.

There are background and individual factors, which also influence career suggestions. For example, gender is a relatively unexplored dimension in such studies,

although female students form the vast majority of most hospitality management student cohorts (Chan 2017). Maxwell and Broadbridge's (2014) study is one of the few to examine differences between male and female student career expectations on graduation in the United Kingdom. Race/ethnicity is generally not examined as an identity dimension; most locational studies view the dominant ethnicity as the 'norm'; however, given the globalized nature of higher education, the positioning of ethnicity is an important consideration. Likewise, most career studies fail to include sexual orientation as an aspect of individual identity.

In summary, most studies conducted about hospitality students and graduate perceptions of the hospitality industry have taken place in one location, although some compared different international locations. To date, none has used the same research instrument in a variety of academic institutions across different cultural contexts. A 'snap shot' approach has prevailed, focusing on a single cohort of students or comparing cohorts; and individual diversity dimensions have been neglected. It is argued here that future research needs to take a longitudinal approach. The outstanding benefit of longitudinal studies compared to cross-sectional studies is the way they allow clear links and changes between cause and effect over time to be established (Willie et al., 2013), whereas career studies that only examine phenomena or beliefs at one point in time may give misleading results (Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). Previous studies show that students' views on career choices change over the course of their degree and it is not sufficient to collect data from different cohorts of students at different stages of their degree. Therefore, it would be more useful to 'track' a specific cohort of hospitality undergraduates through their university experience and to examine their perceptions of a career in the hospitality and tourism sector, before, during and after their degree.

1.1 Time for a new research agenda

A new approach is required to understand how and why hospitality undergraduates' views of the industry as a potential career context change over the course of their degree, and to discover if their experiences cause them to choose a hospitality career, or not. To this end, a qualitative research project is being conducted involving five institutions in five different countries (New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States of America). The research uses a purposive sample of hospitality undergraduates to monitor their perceptions of the

industry early on in their degree, then in every consecutive year until graduation. The researchers' choice of semi-structured interviews, rather than questionnaires, was influenced by the evident gap in knowledge about students' career motivations arising from the reliance on previous quantitative data (Weaver 2009). As one separate part of the wider study, this article presents the findings from the first set of data from the New Zealand (NZ) study, based on semi-structured interviews with first-year hospitality students enrolled on a full-time university degree course. Questions examined individual students' perceptions of the hospitality industry as a suitable career. The ways that their career constructions were influenced, at macro (societal), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level forms the nexus of this article. This multi-level approach responds to Baum et al.'s (2016) call for hospitality and tourism workforce studies to move beyond the unilateral focus of individual careers in separate organizations. Significantly, it also responds to the request of critical hospitality scholars, McIntosh and Harris (2011, p. 129) "to raise questions about hospitality and work, not just in business and managerial terms, but in terms that transgress a diversity of fields and perspectives", including "issues of gender; performance, embodiment and emotional labour to broader issues concerning meaningful work and labour mobility". The following literature review, therefore, follows a structural, organizational and individual framing to set the scene for exploring hospitality students' career motivations.

2. THE CONTEXT OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION AND HOSPITALITY CAREERS IN NEW ZEALAND

Contemporary career theory states that careers can only be truly conceptualized within a specific context. Gunz and Mayrhofer (2011) observe that meaningful career studies, firstly, need to recognize the centrality of work; in this case, hospitality employment and career conceptualizations. Secondly, studies must consider the 'social boundaries'; here, the macro and meso factors influencing hospitality careers in New Zealand. Thirdly, the "embedded-ness" in time, i.e. past experience' (Gunz and Mayrhofer 2011: 254) must be considered when exploring how individuals make their career decisions.

2.1 Macro-level

The New Zealand tourism sector, which includes hospitality enterprises, is undergoing a period of unprecedented expansion. At the structural level, the lack of skilled employees is regarded as a primary challenge (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand 2015). The most recent Tourism Sector Report (Ministry of Business, Innovation and

Employment 2013) indicates that the low unemployment rate (3.6%) and the growth in international visitor arrivals have exacerbated the staff shortage; consequently immigrants are required to fill vacant positions. Hospitality qualifications are an advantage for potential migrants seeking to gain a coveted Permanent Resident visa (PR visa), which allows the holder to live indefinitely in New Zealand. The PR visa category is open to those who have held a New Zealand resident visa for at least 24 months continuously, and significantly, in the last reporting year, the hospitality sector was granted the fourth highest number of skilled migrant residence visas (Dalley, 2017). New Zealand, in common with other anglophile countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, attracts many international students from countries such as China and India. Therefore, NZ hospitality student cohorts are racially and ethnically diverse, with more female than male students, in common with hospitality undergraduate degrees worldwide (Chan 2017). Hospitality education providers, including universities, hotel schools and regional technical institutes which offer hospitality management or culinary programmes, consider that they equip students with an appropriate balance of technical and managerial skills to fit industry's needs (Harkison et al. 2011). However, tensions exist in New Zealand, as in other countries, between employers' expectations and universities' desire to provide a broad education (Lugosi and Jameson 2017) to enhance students' future career options.

2.2 Meso-level

At the organizational level, the composition of the NZ tourism workforce is youthful and multicultural, with the majority of workers employed part-time (Statistics New Zealand 2014). Employment in the service sector is marked by occupational segregation with a disproportionate number of ethnic minority women concentrated in the lowest quality job categories (Parker and Arrowsmith 2012), in common with the situation in other countries (Clevenger and Singh 2013; Costa et al. 2017). Tourism employers consider that poor awareness of career options, combined with low rates of remuneration, contribute to high turnover (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand 2015). Certainly, the norms of high turnover and low pay appear to be persistent in the NZ hospitality industry (Williamson, 2017). The lack of consistent training or development by NZ employers sees many young new recruits departing the sector every year (Luo and Milne 2013), fuelling the perception that hospitality work is of a temporary nature rather than a positive career choice (McIntosh and Harris 2012). Inadequate socialisation procedures and the poor treatment meted out to young

employees across the industry do little to suggest otherwise (Mooney 2016b). Likewise, an engrained industry norm appears to be the NZ tourism sector's reliance on immigrant labour. Hospitality employers do not perceive poor treatment of non-local employees to be a problem, however, there is evidence of widespread exploitation of migrant workers, which includes international students, in the hospitality sector (Searle et al. 2015).

Studies in other locations suggest that the poor treatment encountered by students in the hospitality industry also includes sexual discrimination and harassment. Mkono (2010) investigated the experiences of hospitality students in Zimbabwe and discovered that sexual harassment was not uncommon in hotel workplaces. In the United Kingdom, Ineson et al. (2013) carried out research on hospitality management students following their 12 month international internship. They found critical incidences of homophobic harassment and/or sexual discrimination. Other studies examining the prevalence of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry have uncovered further incidents of violence and bullying of young people, for example, Mathisen et al. (2008) argue that bullying prevails in the restaurant sector, negatively affecting the well-being of both employees and restaurants. Ram et al. (2015) also report the high prevalence of violence, bullying and sexual harassment in the tourism and hospitality industry generally, and more recently, Bohle et al. (2017) having examined the relationship between work organisation, bullying and intention to leave in the Australian hospitality industry, concluded that bullying is a problematic and costly issue confronting the hospitality industry. However, there appear to be little concerted efforts by industry bodies to effectively deal with the endemic bullying and sexual harassment issues that erode students' motivation to make a career in the hospitality industry.

2.3 Micro-level: Hospitality workers' career constructions

Hospitality workforce studies give valuable insights into young people's career experiences in hospitality. For example, Mohsin and Lengler's (2015) research into turnover in the fast-food sector in one NZ city suggests that young employees were disappointed by the lack of recognition and development opportunities during their average two-year tenure. A myriad of international hospitality career studies indicate that satisfying careers depend on employees successfully developing a professional hospitality identity. As individuals demonstrate mastery of career competencies in their work environment (see Kong et al. 2012), they advance more quickly in their careers with support from influential mentors speeding their career trajectories. The ability to

manage their own careers and adapt to new environments are core competencies required for success in the hospitality industry (Wang 2013). When making career decisions, the opportunity to develop or use ‘expert’ technical competencies (career anchors) is a strong motivator. Schein (1978) suggests that because people are anchored by their competencies, they are attracted to jobs that favour their areas of expertise in organizations. In contrast, Savickas’ (2013: 147) career construction theory suggests that individuals actively construct their career identities by enacting three different roles: actor, agent and author. Firstly, as actors, individuals build their career and, in the early stages, outside role models provide guidance about the required behaviours that will build their reputation within the chosen professional networks. The agentic role is characterized by four positive career-adaptive behaviours: concern for the future, self-regulation, curiosity and the confidence to drive their personal ambitions; notably, a fifth, negative, career behaviour is disengagement. Finally, as authors, individuals combine their identity narratives, career themes and individual perspectives to create their own unique career story.

Significantly, individuals with ‘a calling’ or passion for their chosen career are more likely to demonstrate the career-adaptive traits required for a lengthy hospitality career. Xie et al. (2016) discuss three historical perspectives that influence understandings about career callings. The first classical perspective derives from religious meanings where individuals believed that God had called them to perform duties for a higher purpose and common good. The second or contemporary view ‘emphasizes fulfilment and happiness in work life and career choice’ (Xie et al. 2016: 73). Thirdly, the most favoured neo-classical view which defines calling as a preordained role connected with an individual’s desire to have a positive effect on society. The findings of Poulston’s (2015) NZ study, which explored people’s inclination to follow a hospitality career, echo research conclusions in Hong Kong (Kong et al. 2015) and the United Kingdom (Lugosi and Jameson 2017); a ‘passion’ for hospitality fuels individuals’ desire to work in hospitality. As Ikonen (2017: 264) observes in her study on the motivations of hospitality entrepreneurs, the ability to combine passion and life style gives individuals the feeling they “are having it all”, although Ikonen cautions that due to blurring of personal life and work boundaries, overwork and diminished well-being may ensue. However, previous studies do not explain at what stage such passion ignites (or diminishes) and how a hospitality career identity is created and maintained. Therefore, career construction theory, with its

emphasis on career development appeared to be a suitable theoretical framing for investigating the nuances of students' career perceptions in the study.

3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

A longitudinal approach was chosen for this study. Career construction and career calling are developmental concepts pertinent to hospitality career motivations, and longitudinal research designs are especially valuable when teasing out developmental patterns and identifying cause and effect relationships in career behaviours (Praskova et al., 2014). The approach to collecting and analysing data in this NZ study followed an interpretative, social-constructionist approach, underpinned by feminist intersectional theorising, to investigate the development of individual career understandings. A criticism frequently levelled at qualitative hospitality and tourism studies is that sample sizes are small and results are not generalizable. This positivist orientation (see Figueroa-Domecq et al. 2015) is incompatible with more contemporary understandings, for example, those revealed in intersectional studies, on how gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation influence the ways social roles are performed in society. Hospitality and tourism researchers need to be more aware of intergroup differences, not all women in the category 'women' will share the same experiences, likewise, individual student experiences will be influenced by age, ethnicity and other aspects of identity. McBride et al. suggest that because intersectional approaches "challenge all researchers to reflect on the extent (and acknowledgement) of generalization in their work (2015:3), they are especially valuable as a methodological caution "against over generalising...which has become increasingly hidden at the very time its pertinence is increasing" (2015:4).

The lack of attention paid to critical perspectives is not unique to the hospitality and tourism academy; career researchers Roper et al. (2010) decry the lack of contextual 'meaningful' career studies and diversity researchers Özbilgin et al. (2010) echo their call for more local or organization/sector-specific studies to expose hidden aspects of diversity. We argue that the quantitative approach prevalent in the tourism academy discourages the use of innovative critical approaches, especially those using feminist methods, which frequently focus on rich reflexive analysis of data from a small pool of participants. The findings of such studies yield useful insights about why and how a phenomenon happens in a specific context, rather than providing more (over) generalizable results. The introduction to this article recommended the adoption of an interpretive approach, rather than another survey, that could encompass aspects of

identity such as race/ethnicity and gender when investigating hospitality students' early career experiences. Therefore, nimble intersectionality was chosen as a suitable methodological approach for the study as it is 'a paradigm or tool that can help researchers convey the separate and cumulative effects of being "different" in more than one dimension' (Mooney 2016a: 9), within the specific context of the hospitality sector.

The first stage was to examine the hospitality literature and secondary data sources to establish the structural context (macro-level) and salient organizational norms of the hospitality industry (meso-level). The second step involved the choice of career construction theory to encompass the multifaceted nature of hospitality career understandings. The lens used to conceptualize dimensions of diversity was 'social role performance', which accords both with Lynch et al.'s (2011) interpretations of hospitality work as 'performance', and Savickas' (2013) constructionist view of 'self as project'. For example, gender is theorized as the 'doing' of the particular social roles expected from men and women respectively (Broadbridge and Simpson 2011) and ethnicity was interpreted as a cultural marker of difference that is socially constructed and performed (Atewologun et al. 2015). Age was theorized according to Winker and Degele's (2011) notion of 'body-age', which suggests bodies are increasingly required to conform to performance criteria, such as the ideal chronological age bands and associated physical characteristics and norms, including those of youth and physical attractiveness, which differ according to particular jobs or functions. Analysis was not limited to exploring these aspects of identity in the study – allowing the data to speak reveals significant but less overt dimensions of identity that might be overlooked if the study parameters were too narrowly defined at the onset (Özbilgin et al. 2010); for example, excluding sexual orientation or visa classification status.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

In accordance with the wider-study protocol, a purposive sampling approach was used to recruit a proposed group of 20 students in the first year of their degree at the first author's university in New Zealand. Guest et al. (2006) suggest that when the sample population and research parameters are clearly defined, as was the case in this study, data saturation point is achieved at a point between six and twelve interviews. The purposive sampling approach enabled the researchers to establish specific criteria for participation (Merriam 2009) and to attract participants with the desired 'core experiences' (Patton 2002: 234) of career identity development, interviewees were required that met the criteria of being in

the first year of a hospitality or culinary degree. Recruitment notices requesting volunteers for the study were advertised in student meeting areas and the principal researcher also spoke about the study in all first-year topic lectures. The interview group needed to include men and women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ages in order to obtain career perspectives from students belonging to the dominant and non-dominant social groups in New Zealand.

Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and this article presents the data from the first year of the longitudinal study in New Zealand. From the pool of 200 eligible first-year students, 19 students volunteered to participate. The sample size was deemed sufficient, as when the scope of a study and the targeted population are clearly defined, saturation point is reached after six and 12 interviews (Guest et al. 2006). The demographic details of this study's participants are outlined in Table 1.

Name	Gender	Age band	Ethnicity	Status	English as first language
Anthony	Male	24-27	Māori/NZ European	NZ citizen	Yes
Adam	Male	18-20	Taiwanese	Student visa	No
Amy	Female	18-20	NZ European	NZ citizen	Yes
Amber	Female	21-23	Māori	NZ citizen	Yes
Barry	Male	18-20	Taiwanese	Student visa	No
Christina	Female	18-20	NZ European	NZ citizen	Yes
Cathy	Female	18-20	Chinese	Student visa	No
Debbie	Female	18-20	Central European	Student visa	No
Fenella	Female	18-20	South East Asian	NZ citizen	No
Jacqui	Female	24-27	Malaysian	Student visa	No
Jack	Male	18-20	NZ European	NZ citizen	Yes
James	Male	24-27	Taiwanese	Permanent Resident visa	No
Lara	Female	18-20	South East Asian	NZ citizen	Yes
Martina	Female	21-23	Taiwanese	Student visa	No
Ron	Male	18-20	South East Asia/New Zealander	NZ citizen	Yes
Romilly	Female	18-20	South East Asian	NZ citizen	Yes
Sally	Female	21-23	Chinese	Student visa	No
Valerie	Female	21-23	Chinese	Student visa	No
Yannis	Male	18-20	Central European	Student visa	No

Table 1: Background of study participants

Interview questions (see Appendix 1) sought students' perceptions of the industry before, and during, the first year of their degree. The digitally recorded interviews were professionally transcribed and data were coded according to the interview question using NVIVO software. Thereafter, thematic analysis in accordance with the nimble intersectional approach (Mooney 2016a) was carried out. Here, the structural features of the NZ hospitality sector; the norms of hospitality organizations; and aspects of individual identity that emerged from the interviews, for example, gender, were coded. The interactions between the three levels were then pinpointed and analyzed.

4. FINDINGS

This section will focus on the major career themes that emerged from the data, firstly outlining the factors that had influenced students' career choices to allow students' career expectations and the varying extent of their industry experience to be explored, later, in the discussion section.

4.1 Students' career choice influencers

The analysis identified that there were three primary motivations for choosing a university hospitality degree. Firstly, participants chose to study hospitality because they were passionately interested in hospitality. Secondly, they were influenced by their parents' positive attitude towards a degree in hospitality or tourism. Thirdly, pragmatic considerations motivated students to choose a hospitality degree, after their prior choice of an alternative career had proved to be a disappointment.

Passion for the industry

Participants frequently described how their choice of degree had been inspired by their interest in food and beverage.

I was thinking about what kind of job I can do and I thought if I like cooking maybe I can be a restaurant manager. I can study a food and beverage major so I can become one. (Debbie, Central European)

A common thread running through many participants' career themes was the desire to travel. They believed a hospitality degree allowed them to be 'global citizens':

You can get a job anywhere with it, or a bartender ... [I want to] finish my degree ... then travel in Europe and America and just learn as

much as I can all around the world. Then hopefully, come home and open a place of my own. (Jack, NZ European)

This group of students indicated that it was their choice whether they had a successful career or not, it was their responsibility to maximize career opportunities.

I more rely on myself to do hospitality because hospitality is all about experience and hands on learning, learning from mentors and colleagues, and interacting with the customers. So it's really up to me, but not the papers to set me up for success. (James, Taiwanese)

Some students with parents who had prior work experience in the sector, e.g. as tour guides or chefs, contributed to their children's passion. However, other students had to contend with parental opposition. Future earnings potential coloured some parents' aspirations for their children, as Cathy explained:

Yeah, [my parents said,] 'We want you to be a dentist because you're going to make a huge amount of money after graduating'. If you graduate from med school you're rich already, because you get paid a lot and it's pretty easy to get a job. (Cathy, Chinese)

The strength of parental influence was reflected in participants' descriptions of the robust defence of their hospitality career aspirations, as one student's insight reveals:

In Asian culture a lot of their parents put pressure to do certain things. 'Okay we want you to be a nurse, a doctor' ... but I'm like, 'No I don't want to do that – I want to do this'. (Romilly, South East Asian)

Parental advice to choose the degree

The second driver for the students' decision to take the degree was parental advice. Gaining a PR visa was an attractive proposition for some overseas students, whose parents believed that graduates had more opportunity to achieve PR status by working in the tourism sector. One student discussed the merits of New Zealand over Canada for ease in gaining residency and the availability of health care for ageing parents. She finally decided the hospitality degree was more useful than other degrees:

Okay, [I decided] I'll go to New Zealand but still I was going to go for business [degree], and then I realized everybody was doing business and it seems like it's going to be super hard to get a job after I graduate. (Cathy, Chinese)

However, even parents who recommended a hospitality degree expressed considerable reservations. One restaurateur father, whose son was undecided about his career choice

or what to study, insisted his son also took accountancy professional examinations in his first year of study in the hospitality degree. Others considered that a degree in tourism rather than a hospitality degree, would advantage their children when applying for a Permanent Resident visa. Yet students who were passionate about studying hospitality influenced the final decision as the following quote reveals:

Yes, they [parents] want me to choose a tourism major, but I don't, I chose events and marketing ... they said, 'You can go to North Island if you do the tourism – it's easier to get PR'. (Valerie, Chinese)

Drifting into a hospitality career after an unsatisfactory previous career choice

A number of participants decided to do a hospitality or tourism degree after they had experimented with a different career; for example, a health science degree. Two had 'drifted' into hospitality work, enjoyed the experience and therefore chose to study hospitality. Others chose hospitality after a 'gap year' because they perceived a good fit with their talents or because it offered interesting employment prospects, compared to other sectors; for example, Barry who had completed his final school years in New Zealand explained:

I was doing engineering before I start hospitality. Then I found out engineering is kind of boring and kind of hard work also, so I decided to choose something else. I looked into the programme on the [university] website and the first thing I saw was hospitality. I thought that would be useful for me, like to actually learn a skill. (Barry, Taiwanese)

Even after choosing a hospitality related degree, two students later changed their degree to suit their evolving career aspirations. For example, Amber switched from Event Management to a Hospitality degree because she thought it prepared students to organize events on a more practical level, as she described:

It was after my second semester in a Bachelor of Arts [Events] I came to the realization that in order to be a competent – for me – Events Manager, I really needed to know more about the hospitality side. (Amber, Māori)

Another student who transferred from a health science degree at another highly ranked university, initially planned to take a culinary degree and become a chef, but was intimidated by watching professional chefs working. She explained her reservations:

I applied to [university] to study as a chef because I thought it would be good to find a job ... but then when I came to orientation day and I

saw all those chefs there ... they were so cool, artistic, so creative. I thought I don't think I can be that good, so I just changed to hospitality. (Debbie, Central European)

4.2 Participants' expectations of a hospitality career

Participants were asked to name the three most 'important' factors when choosing a career and if hospitality fulfilled those criteria. *All* participants expressed the belief that not everyone had the 'people skills' required for this career. Some regretted that hospitality careers were not regarded as a good career choice among family and friends. One student spoke about the disadvantages of negative perceptions about hospitality as a career among her unemployed friends in China:

The most interesting is I know someone – they don't have a job and they don't learn so much and they don't go to university. They just stay home and just say 'I don't like hospitality, it's like [being] a servant'. Ridiculous ... but hospitality can help them get some experience and earn money. (Valerie, Chinese)

The majority of participants felt that that job satisfaction was the most important factor when choosing their career. Having a 'passion' for hospitality was judged to be essential if one wished to have a successful career. Others felt that while money was not their most important factor, they needed to earn 'enough' to follow a satisfactory life style.

Yes, I do want to get into that kind of high corporate [job]. There's that kind of idea that I could supply financial security for my family and that's something that drives me. It's kind of funny thinking that you're just doing it for the money but it's one of the rewards of the job. (Anthony, Māori/NZ European)

All students found learning to interact with people 'up close and personal' a challenge. One student accustomed to working in his family restaurant described his feelings of trepidation:

I like working with people but people that I know. But people that I don't know are kind of a territory that I go in once and don't like to go back. (Ron, South East Asian/New Zealander)

Negative service experiences not only eroded students' confidence but led one student to feel she lacked the outgoing personality she believed was necessary for a hospitality career. She felt she needed to be more sociable:

Yeah I'm kind of trying to change myself a little bit, because when I was in high school or science I was just too shy and I didn't have many friends. But here people are so friendly so I'm just pushing

myself to talk more and make more friends. (Debbie, Central European)

Again, cultural differences shaded students' perceptions. Some Chinese students were surprised to serve 'real' customers in the university's commercial restaurant. One student explained how inappropriate it seemed to be serving customers:

It is challenging, because ... I used to be the one who is served, instead of the waitress that is serving people. Suddenly you have to change your mind ... and be on the other side of the table. (Cathy, Chinese)

In more subjects, such as accounting, most participants appreciated learning to apply theoretical concepts, gaining insights into the complexities of business and, in some cases, more realistic attitudes:

Thinking back I was quite naïve. I was thinking if I do this course and I save some money maybe I'll start my own business like a cafe, a small cafe or something. Doing Human Resources, the accounting course and knowing you have to account for everything. It's maybe ... not that easy and going into it deeper, it's like, oh maybe I shouldn't do this! I don't know, it kind of destroyed my confidence. (Jack, NZ European)

Some participants contested the validity of subjects they believed not to have immediate industry relevance. One participant considered that it was not useful to be asked to write a research report about indigenous identity. Others understood the underlying objectives of such assessments:

I realized that education is not just about passing a test, or [what] your teacher taught you. Papers like Organizational Behaviour made me question why I think this way – why am I this way? (Lara, South East Asian)

4.3 Industry experience

Lecturers encouraged participants to work in hospitality businesses during their studies. Students appreciated the benefits of practicing their skills.

When I did my events papers and then went and worked in events, theory was going off in my head. I watched the Events Manager cover it and it's like, wow! That's something we got taught but it doesn't make sense in the classroom, until you see it in that practical scene and you're like 'ah!' (Amber, Māori)

Participants believed industry networks were very important. Some students seized introduction opportunities, wishing to find a mentor to help develop their careers, as one student explained after meeting a wine producer. Some participants chose to gain work experience in areas of their passion. For example, one culinary arts student commenced holiday work in a patisserie business. She continued to work part-time as her employer was tolerant of her mistakes while learning. Other participants worked 20 hours or more to finance their study. Jobs were paid at minimum pay rates, only two students earned marginally more for supervisory roles. Significantly, many participants at this early career stage expressed reservations about how they would combine their life-style expectations with a hospitality career:

At the moment, it's fine, I'll work any hours, pretty much, but I want to work my way up so that I can work my own hours. (Christina, NZ European)

On-the-job training was variable. Although some employers taught participants how to avoid mistakes, some did not wish to develop their workers, as one student described his first work experience in a bar:

Even though they stuffed me in the back washing glasses, I still, hate to say, forced my way, but I did. When he was teaching them new stuff, I made sure I was there watching. Got in a bit of trouble a few times for it, because I wasn't meant to be there, but forget it, I was learning and it excited me. (Jack, NZ European)

Overall, for students who worked in the industry, the variety of different career options supported participants' beliefs that they had made an exciting career choice. Generally, they considered hospitality work to be challenging and complex. However, participants without work experience, in the main students from overseas, did not get the opportunity to gain confidence and develop career-building skills.

4. Discussion

As outlined previously, the data were interpreted using career construction theory, and this section will link the construction of individual career identities with the findings reported in the previous section. The structure follows the three stages of career construction: (1) self as actor; (2) self as agent; and (3) self as author. During the first stage, individuals establish their careers and work identity. In the second stage, the 'agent' actions drive careers events in a story 'plot' and, finally, the interpretation about 'what it all means' is given by the career 'author', expressing their career theme.

Sometimes the career story starts with a missing link that the individual wishes to find – this may be the central meaning in a career story that emerges in the telling.

5.1 Learning to perform as a hospitality professional

As ‘actors’, students learned to demonstrate the behaviours congruent with a professional hospitality identity. Savickas (2013: 154) emphasized that the individual’s reputation and occupational personality, while self-constructed, are formed from the ‘outside-in’. In the hospitality context, how well the ‘actor’ has performed is reflected in their workplace ‘pedigree’ and work experience in prestigious properties is recorded in their curriculum vitae (Mooney et al. 2016). At entry level in the hospitality industry, employees require good technical and social skills to perform the tasks competently and thus experience job satisfaction (Shani et al. 2014). In this study, the young participants’ work identities were relatively unformed; however, the findings suggest that participants held clear ideas about required behaviours, such as the capacity for hard work, responsiveness to guest demands and flexibility, competencies confirmed by hospitality career studies (for example, Kong et al. 2012).

Participants identified the hospitality career norms identified in previous studies; for example, managers need to start ‘at the bottom’ and be ‘hands on’ (Mooney 2016b). Some participants found it easy to ‘perform’ in the same way as their role-models, receiving pleasure from ‘making guests happy’, supporting Poulston’s (2015) assertion that intrinsic rewards fuel hospitality workers’ career motivations. In service work, managers and co-workers positive perceptions are particularly important as they enable the construction of a professional identity (Michel et al. 2013). Students were affected by the attitudes shown towards them. Some reacted to unfavourable feedback by querying their suitability for the industry, damaging their nascent professional identity. Others, for example, Jack, when forbidden the opportunity to receive bar training, was able to externalize his employer’s behaviour, viewing it as unprofessional, rather than as a reflection of his worth.

5.2 Planning for a hospitality career

During the second important ‘agent’ stage, career agency is developed. For most young people choosing a career is the ‘*preferred strategy for integrating ourselves into society*’ (Savickas 2013: 155). Career decisions lead hospitality workers to move vocationally across different types of hospitality organizations (Mooney et al. 2016; Kong et al. 2012; Wang 2013). According to Savickas, in this second phase, new

understandings and constructive work experiences lead to career adaptability across four dimensions: (1) concern; (2) control; (3) curiosity; and (4) confidence. The notion of ‘calling’ (Xie et al. 2016) links to positive adaptation and a passion for hospitality, which should theoretically help hospitality students to demonstrate the desired career-adaptive behaviours. Savickas (2013) points out there may be ‘career problems’ for each career adaptability dimension, visible in negative (deficit) rather than coping behaviours which he described as “career indifference, which reflects apathy, pessimism, and planlessness” (p.159). Representative behaviours associated with the four adaptability dimensions will now be linked to the findings detailed previously.

Career concern

With this first dimension of adaptability, many students demonstrated planning competencies and were aware of what career paths were available. The oldest (27-year-old) participant discussed his intention to specialize as a Rooms Division executive. Some interviewees displayed the opposite behaviours: showing indifference to the various hospitality career options and stating their intention not to make a career in the sector.

Increasing personal control over their vocational future

The required personal control competency is shown in decision-making abilities, demonstrated through assertive, and occasionally wilful, behavioural traits. Some students showed this behaviour by switching their career choice to hospitality and overcoming the resistance of their parents to their career choice. Some Asian parents did not initially support a hospitality career choice, but gave in when their children persisted.

Displaying curiosity in exploring possible selves and future scenarios

Proactive students demonstrated experimentation, risk-taking and wilful behaviour traits; for example, swapping their ‘major’ study choice to facilitate future career success or unexpected career opportunities. The non-coping behaviour associated with career curiosity, according to Savickas, is ‘unrealism’ (2013, p. 158). This may be expressed in idealistic expectations about what career opportunities are available at this early career stage, which if thwarted may cause disillusionment. One European student, on a student visa, expressed disappointment that he was unable to find a job in New Zealand in spite of his extensive work experience in ‘renowned’ cafes in Central

Europe. He left New Zealand before completing his first semester. While his motives for discontinuing his studies are undisclosed, it is possible that his failure to gain work experience may have contributed to his decision to abandon his studies.

Career confidence

The problem-solving competencies associated with this dimension are shown in persistence, striving and industrious behaviours. Confirming research that training in many hospitality organizations is very poor or non-existent (Harkison et al. 2011; Luo and Milne 2013), one participant referred to ‘stealing’ his training in bar-tending. The opposing face of career-confidence was inhibition – participants who had indicated that they did not feel in control of their careers showed this trait, expressing doubts about their suitability for a hospitality career, by not having either the right personality or the right ability.

As observed previously, for a successful hospitality management career, strong self-management and career development competencies must be demonstrated by individuals (Kong et al. 2012; Wang 2013). Good social and networking skills as well as career-building competencies are required (Blomme et al. 2009; Kong et al. 2012; Walsh and Taylor 2007) and hospitality students will need to show career-adaptive behaviours. Many participants who lacked previous hospitality work experience did not appear to demonstrate the adaptive career behaviours that would enable them to gain such experience, for example, they expressed their intention to continue working in non-hospitality areas, such as office work.

5.3 Forming a hospitality career identity

In the third stage of career construction, workers weave a cohesive career story about their employment experiences. Savickas (2013) observed that, by late adolescence, individuals will have developed an independent meaningful life, going on to ‘integrate their actions and agency into a unique identity supported by a unified life story’ (2013: 163). In the first-year stage of the study, it appeared that the participants with the strongest hospitality career story were students whose career choice was fuelled by their calling, or passion, for the industry, which supports Xie et al.’s (2016) notion that career calling is positively linked with career adaptability competencies. Students who did not choose hospitality as a first career choice while demonstrating some career-adaptive behaviours, also showed indecision and anxiety. However, in particular, students who

had chosen the degree for expedient or extrinsic factors unrelated to personal career goals, more frequently displayed apathetic behaviours than other students.

5.4 Intersections of identity in career construction

Age, gender, social class, ethnicity and visa status intersections appeared to influence the career constructions of hospitality students. Participants in their first year of a student visa (with a limit of 20 working hours a week) exhibited fewer examples of career adaptive traits than students with PR visas or NZ citizenship. This may have been one of the reasons that led three participants on student visas to abandon their hospitality degree during the first year of the study. Gender intersections with ethnicity and social class emerged as two female Chinese participants described their discomfort when serving others, instead of being ‘the guests on the other side of the counter’ to which they were accustomed. Their attitudes indicated negative societal attitudes towards careers in hospitality, which conforms to existing literature about the perception of careers in medicine, law and engineering being considered more desirable than hospitality by Asian parents in the United States (Leong and Flores 2015). Participants recognized the irony of such negative perceptions among their friends who lacked other viable career options but preferred to remain unemployed.

One participant in particular exhibited resistance to the traditional gendered and culturally influenced expectations of a woman’s role in China. Initially, her father refused to allow her to study for a hospitality career, as he believed that his daughter would be forced to offer sexual favours in exchange for promotion in the industry. However, she showed perseverance and wilfulness and finally gained his agreement to finance her study. Other women participants expressed their awareness of the dissonance between the expectations of passionate hospitality professionals and fulfilling the biological role (motherhood) expected of women (Broadbridge and Simpson 2011). These views differ from those expressed by young female hospitality students in Maxwell and Broadbridge’s (2014) study, who felt that gender-based stereotyping, rather than practical issues around combining work with caregiving responsibilities, would limit their future occupational choices. As in the United Kingdom (Lucas and Keegan 2008), where employers pay young workers consistently less than their older workers, discrimination against younger workers was visible in the minimum wage paid to participants by NZ employers.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study remind us of the importance of situational and locational context when studying individual career choices. For the participants in this study, a fusion of global and societal factors, parental influences and individual motivations significantly influenced career constructions. Participants with student visas were aware of macro-level factors, such as residency and visa requirements. Some students had enrolled in a hospitality degree as they believed that hospitality or tourism qualifications would help them to gain a PR visa. At meso or organizational level, the industry norm of low pay, allied to poor working conditions, was not congruent with the factors that participants in this hospitality career study and other studies (for example, Richardson 2009) considered important for a satisfying career. Youthful body-age stereotyping was evidenced by the minimum hourly pay rate received by all participants, regardless of industry expertise or ability. The lack of value ascribed to their work by employers interfered with their construction of a professional identity in these pivotal early career stages. In some cases, it reduced participants' confidence resulting in doubts about whether they 'fitted' a hospitality career.

At an individual level, a significant finding was that the calling or passion which led students to choose a hospitality degree was only seen in *some students*, despite the certainty expressed by *all students* that a passion for hospitality was essential for a hospitality career. Although passion is linked with positive career-adaptive behaviours (Xie et al. 2016), it can dissipate and graduates will leave the hospitality sector (Richardson and Butler 2012), possibly as a result of the overwork that Ikonen (2017) suggests may occur when passion and work merge. Intersections of ethnicity and class were visible in career constructions at micro levels, due to the cultural and social class-based positioning of 'hospitality' as an inferior career choice for some South East Asian participants. Gendered intersections also emerged as young women expressed doubts about the realities of combining unpredictable work schedules with family commitments in the future.

The multi-faceted nature of changes in students' career motivations during their first year of study enlarge on the findings of previous studies, which indicated that the majority of hospitality graduates choose not to make their career in the sector. Obviously there is value in education 'for the sake of education' and it is not being suggested here that a university degree in hospitality management is- simply and narrowly-only preparing graduates for careers in one industry. However, the majority of students in this study specifically chose to study hospitality, with the intention of

pursuing a career in the industry and it is clear that this intention has weakened in some cases. This could be rightfully interpreted as a 'cost', both in terms of time and money, on the part of these students, many of whom have had negative experiences in the hospitality industry, which have altered their perceptions of the industry as a suitable potential employer.

What must also be considered here is the shortage of qualified personnel entering the hospitality industry, and the negative repercussions for hospitality organisations who fail to retain individuals that appear to be well suited to a career in hospitality. Therefore, there are also talent implications for Human Resource Managers in the sector as negative workplace experiences will reduce an individual's belief that they are suited to a hospitality career whereas positive career experiences help to form a strong career construct. As career 'calling' or passion is linked to job satisfaction, hospitality employers should recognize and respect the professional identity of their younger workers by providing adequate rewards, rather than treating them as unskilled transient workers, as revealed by Mohsin and Lengler's (2015) study. They must also guard against the possibility of over-work and burn-out associated with passion. University curriculum designers should ensure that students on a student work visa are given enriched opportunities for professional development.

While a limitation of this small New Zealand study was that it was conducted with students enrolled in one NZ university, the empirical intersectional analysis provides evidence that students' individual motivations for enrolling in a hospitality degree in New Zealand are linked to the career adaptability competencies required for a hospitality career. Ethnicity intersecting with gender and age appears to influence the formation of a hospitality career identity. Further research is important, as the initial analysis of the second year findings in this NZ longitudinal study already indicate significant changes in second-year students' motivation to follow a hospitality career. Individual aspects of identity and hospitality workplace norms will be explored in greater depth in subsequent publications; this exploratory article focused primarily on students' career construction behaviours.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions: Student hospitality career perceptions

1. When and how did you first get interested in hospitality?
2. Why did you choose a hospitality degree?
3. Have you had experience working in the industry?
4. How much experience?
5. What kind of job do you think you want to do when you graduate?
6. Why do you like that job?
7. What do you like about the hospitality industry?
8. Is there any aspect of the industry that you do not like?
9. What type of placement/ work experience in hospitality are you thinking of while studying?
10. Are you working currently/ have plans to work part time?
11. How are you finding your degree?
12. Is it what you expected so far?
13. What perception of the hospitality industry has it given you?
14. Do you feel it is preparing you to succeed in the hospitality industry?
15. Would you recommend a hospitality career to others?
16. What are the three things (factors) you feel are important in choosing a career? Does the hospitality industry offer these?